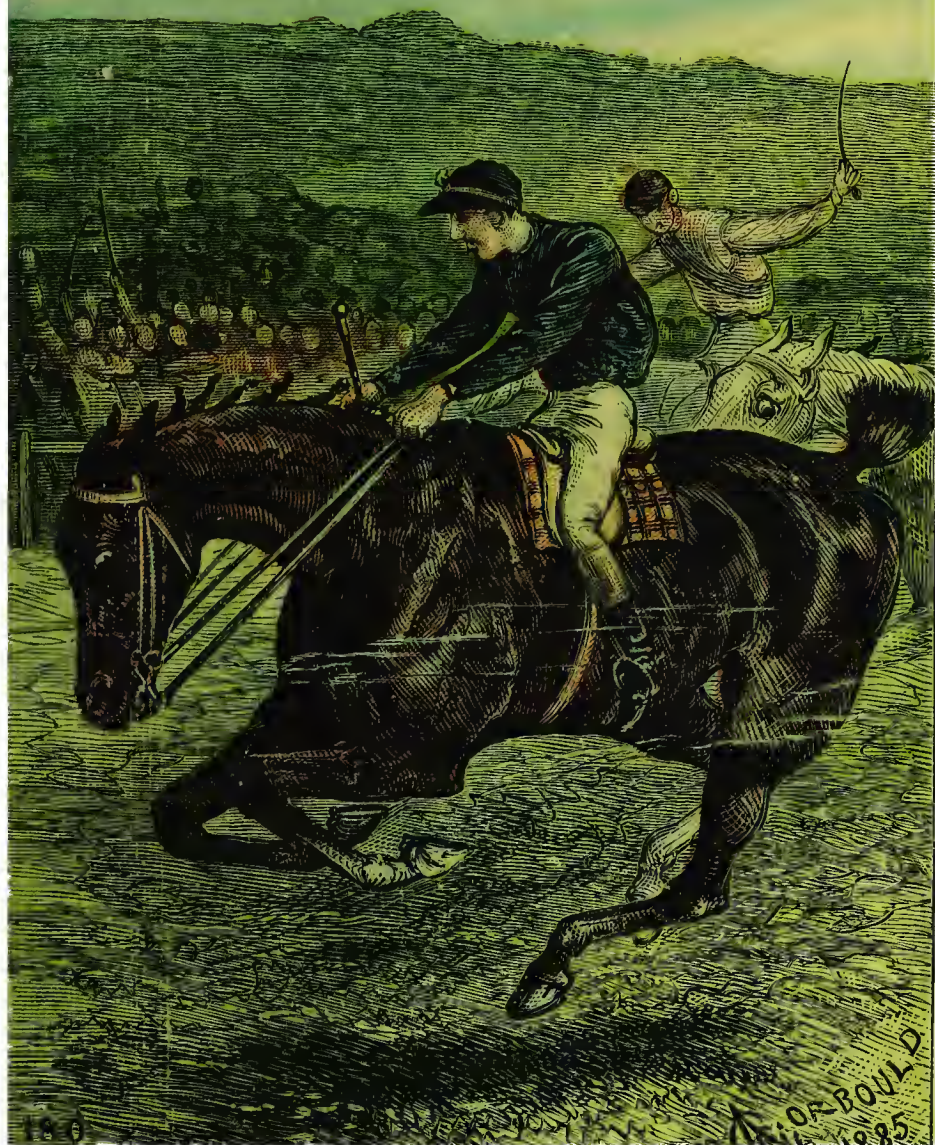


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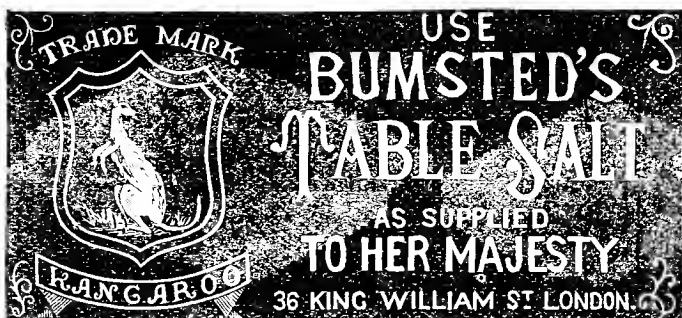
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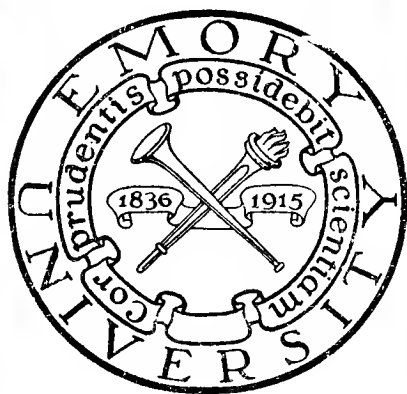
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Were in his limbs : but he was wild,
Wild as the wild deer, and untaught."

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FROM POST TO FINISH.

CHAPTER I.

“PHAETON’S LEGER.”

THE chains are up on Doncaster Town Moor, and, although the sun has not yet topped the horizon, through the dull grey of the early morning a knot of half-a-dozen people might have been discerned grouped around the famous winning-post.

“You are sure you have made no mistake, Greyson?” said a tall, slight, saturnine man of forty or thereabouts.

“No, sir,” replied the trainer. “I have measured them at home, I think, pretty correctly; and you will find it as I tell you, that, though Caterham is the best of the pair, the other is about good enough to win this Leger with. But you will see for yourself in another minute. I can just catch the beat of their gallop; they must have reached the Red House by this.”

The rapid thud of horses advancing at full speed was now distinctly audible; a few seconds more, and four horses flashed past the winning-post; the foremost with a three-quarters of a length lead.

“It’s as I told you, sir,” exclaimed Greyson, the trainer. “Caterham’s won; but you can see he’s not very much better than Phaeton. The old horse, too, is a good third; and that shows you that the form is pretty true.”

“Oh, Lord! what a *coup*,” exclaimed a short, puffy little

man, who was one of the spectators. "It ought to about make all our fortunes. To think of having the first favourite for the Leger, and a second string in the stable good enough to win with."

"It looks like good business, Sam, doesn't it? To bet against Caterham and triekle our money on to Phaeton is our game for the next forty-eight hours. The only thing is, old man, that all this wants doing with a good deal of care. Remember, Caterham must remain first favourite till the fall of the flag, and therefore our hostile demonstration must not be too pronounced; while as for Phaeton, although we must back him to win a big stake, I want there to be pretty liberal odds against him till the very last."

"Beg pardon, sir," said the trainer; "but do you mean to give the Squire a hint of this? It's notorious, you know, that Mr. Rockingham has backed the favourite for a very large stake——"

"Let my cousin look to himself," replied Cuthbert Elliston, bitterly; "if he had stood to me last year I should have felt bound to give him a hint of the way things stand; as it is, let him take his chance with the public generally."

"Take the horses home, Tom, as quietly as you can," said the trainer, as the four competitors in the trial walked up to him. "It was about all out of Caterham, I suppose?"

"Yes, Mr. Greyson. "I'd nothing much in hand; 'twas just about as much as I could do to get rid of Phaeton at the finish; and, what is more, I fancy he stays just a bit the best of the two."

A very nice trio were the three men who, the trial over, walked back from the Town Moor to breakfast at the Salutation that Monday morning before the Leger. Cuthbert Elliston, the first cousin of Alister Rockingham, lord of Cranley Chase, was about as evil a specimen of a gentleman blackleg as it was possible to encounter. It was the old story; a man of moderate means, he had gambled fiercely and wildly, and the pigeon of early days was now trans-

formed into the unmistakeable rook. All feeling of honour was dead in the man's nature, and either in the tactics of the turf or the card-table there was very little he would shrink from. He might hesitate about concealing the king up his sleeve at *écarté*, but he would have had no scruples about pursuing that game with an antagonist half-bemused by wine. Similarly on the turf; as long as he escaped the jurisdiction of the Jockey Club he was utterly unprincipled in his proceedings. He and Mr. Sam Pearson, attorney-at-law, were the joint proprietors of a few horses, and trained at William Greyson's, a clever man in his profession, but with a somewhat shady reputation. As it so happened they were this year joint proprietors of a colt called Caterham, which, having won the Two Thousand and finished third for the Derby, was, owing to the going amiss of one of his Epsom conquerors, and the non-entrance of the other in the Doncaster race, now first favourite for the Leger. And that the British public were likely to have an extremely bad race of it the trial we have seen and the conversation we have overheard pretty clearly indicates.

Arrived at the Salutation, the three sat down to a regular Yorkshire breakfast, a thing which, as you are a breakfast eater, is by no means to be despised; and over the broiled ham and game pie as delectable a robbery as was ever concocted at Doncaster—and this, by the way, is saying no little—was planned.

* * * * *

It is the day of the great race, and the crowd are pouring up the avenue that leads to the famous Moor, upon which for more than a century the Blue Ribbon of the North has been decided. The street-preachers shriek forth their vehement denunciations side by side with the three-card men hoarsely vociferating that you do not name the Queen of Clubs for "a croon." The quiet Yorkshire town is in that furious state of ferment that only occurs to it once a year, when train after train disgorges its hundreds all ravenous

for food, drink, and a bet on the Leger. Caterham would win. How could there be any doubt of it? He had beaten everything that was going to oppose him, with the exception of some two or three dark colts, of which little was expected. If ever there was a race upon which it seemed really judicious to back the favourite this was it. And yet the pertinacity with which the ring fielded was wondrous strange.

"There's as much as seven to four going as ever you please to write down," said a veteran sportsman. "I don't understand it, Roekingham. I can't help thinking there's a screw loose. The ring would hardly field like this unless they knew something. Going by public form, it ought to be two to one *on* Caterham. I can't for the life of me see what the bookmakers are going for! They are like sheep, we all know; and only let three or four of the magnates of the mystic circle make up their minds to bet heavily against a horse and the smaller fry follow suit with wonderful rapidity. This outsider, Phaeton, who is in the same stable as the favourite, is nibbled at a good deal. I saw some cleverish men backing him last night, and again this morning. I tell you what it is, Roekingham, I shall just go and take the odds about him to save myself. Like you, I stand pretty heavily on the favourite, and don't fancy being spilt when they're winning with their second string!"

"Nonsense, Areheliffe; it's little likely that they have got anything better than the winner of the Guineas in their stable. No; if Bill Greyson takes the Leger it will be with Caterham. I am standing him a raker, and I mean standing him out."

A tall, good-looking man is Alister Roekingham. Although he is turned of fifty, and his hair is shot with silver he is a handsome man still; but his face is haggard and careworn, and his lips twitch slightly as he thinks how heavy the stake is that Caterham carries for him. A more unblenching gambler than Alister Roekingham never cut card or rattled die, but he cannot help twinges of remorse at

times when he remembers the broad, unencumbered aeres that came to him at twenty-one, and reflects how woefully mortgaged his son will find them when he in his turn shall succeed. Ah! would he succeed? It was almost a question, and the next hour would materially assist in solving that riddle.

There was quite a little knot of spectators to see the favourite make his toilet for the great race. A right good-looking one, apparently as fit as hands could make him. Few troubled themselves to look at his stable-companion, although Phaeton would not have been pronounced a bad-looking colt had Caterham been out of the way.

“I suppose the colt is all right, Greyson?” observed Cuthbert Elliston, meaningly.

“Quite so, sir,” replied the trainer; “and Phaeton did such a good gallop yesterday morning that he is quite worth backing for a trifle on the off-chance.”

The roar of the blatant bookmakers waxes more and more furious as three o’clock approaches, and the starters for the Leger pae slowly in Indian file past the Grand Stand. A few minutes more, and turning round they come thundering back in their preliminary canter. Nothing moves better than the favourite, and many an onlooker dashes back into the ring to make a modest investment on Caterham. At last the roar of the ring is hushed, and all heads are craned forward to gaze upon that gaudy little knot of silken jackets that are congregated at the foot of the slight incline that marks the commencement of the great Doncaster race. Two or three breaks-away, and then the fourteen runners for the St. Leger are despatched, and the dark-blue jacket of Phaeton is almost immediately seen in the van.

“Making running for his stable-companion!” exclaim the multitude.

“Strangling the lot,” murmured Cuthbert Elliston to his partner, Sam Pearson. “Old Greyson would never put the double upon us.”

"No, it's right enough, you may depend upon it. If Phaeton don't win it, it'll be because he's not quite good enough; but anyhow you may rest assured that whatever does win it won't be Caterham. I've seen to that *myself*."

All along the far side, down away past the Rifle Butts, the dark-blue jacket leads the field a cracker. Still the backers of the favourite have no cause as yet to feel uncomfortable. He bears his straw banner bravely in front of the ruck, and now they come thundering round the Red House turn. The dark-blue jacket holds a clear three-lengths lead as they come into the straight, and suddenly arises that fatal shout which has made many a backer shiver ere now.

"The favourite's beat!—the favourite's out of it;" and through his glasses Alister Roekingham can see that the wearer of the straw-coloured jacket is already hard upon his horse in the endeavour to keep his place. They are racing in real earnest now, and a very few strides more sees Caterham completely done with. One, two, three horses emerge from the ruck, and one after the other strives to get up to the leader; but the blue jacket stalls off each successive challenge, and finally glides past the winning-post half-a-length to the good.

Phaeton has won the St. Leger, while the favourite was not even amongst the first four.

"By Jove! what a *coup*," exclaimed Cuthbert Elliston, as he slapped his turf-partner on the shoulder.

"Yes," replied Pearson, who was already running his eye rapidly over his betting-book; "but I'll tell you what: it's my impression, Elliston—it's my impression this will about finish your cousin. How deeply he's involved no one can know better than myself. I've had to manage the raising of the sinews of war, as you know, for some years now; but I fancy that I've never had a more troublesome job than I shall have to find the money for next Monday."

"Bah!" rejoined Elliston; "he has a couple of days yet to get home in."

“Get home!” returned the attorney with a sneer; “you and I know what that means. How often does any one get out of the scrape that way? while the case with which one’s liabilities are doubled is simply miraculous.”

It was with a weary smile that Alister Rockingham dropped his race-glasses back into their case. He was a good loser, and might have sardonically exclaimed,—“If I am not, I wonder who should be. I’ve been practising it steadily for the last thirty years, and, if I stop now, it’s simply because there’s nothing left to lose.” No one but himself knew how terribly hard hit he was by the race just won. Plenty of his friends knew that he had backed Caterham heavily; but even Sam Pearson, his solicitor, had no idea what a tremendous plunge he had made upon this race with a view to recovering his losses on a most disastrous season. Had he known the extent to which his client was involved it is more than probable that, despite his partner, Pearson would have given the Squire of Cranley Chase a hint about Phaeton: but, though the solicitor could take his own line very fairly, there was a savage concentration about Cuthbert Elliston that made men rather shy of quarreling with him. He had taken causeless umbrage at Alister Rockingham’s refusal to help him pecuniarily a twelvemonth ago; but, in good truth, Rockingham had no money to spare, and was almost as hard pressed as his cousin.

As Rockingham descended from the Stand, a slight, handsome, dark-eyed youth dashed up to him, with a face brimming over with pleasure and excitement, and exclaimed:—

“What a ripping race it was, father, wasn’t it? And only think, I have won twenty-eight sovereigns over it, and got it.”

“Why, where did you get your inspiration, Gerald?”

“Well, mine came directly from old Joseph, our coachman; but who on earth put him up to the fact of Phaeton being a good thing I really have no idea. I got twenty-eight pounds to two from one of these ready-money men, and

he booked up like a gentleman as soon as the race was over."

I wonder if it is possible to imagine a grimmer contrast than this man who has just experienced Fortune's finishing blow affords to the bright-eyed Harrow boy who has just won his first stake over that most fascinating of all amusements, the backing of racehorses. Ruined Alister Rockingham was before Phaeton swept past the winning-post; but even he himself as yet hardly realises what a thorough crash it is that has befallen him. It is the very acme of Fate. Here is young Gerald, who has just left Harrow, and is going up to Cambridge next month, exulting over the winning of twenty-eight sovereigns, with an inheritance of ten thousand a year departed from him on the same race.

CHAPTER II.

DOLLIE GREYSON.

IN Coney Street, York, dwelt a prosperous haberdasher of the name of Greyson. He was a man excessively popular, not only in York itself but with all the country families round about the city. Gloves, shirts, neckties, all the gentlemen of the district vowed could be obtained at no other place than Greyson's. Thomas Greyson did a roaring trade, and was a warm man in his vocation. He was brother to that William Greyson, the trainer, who had prepared Caterham and Phaeton for the Leger. Though excellent friends the brothers met but seldom,—their paths in life diverged widely; but constantly through the shop in Coney Street fitted a fair-haired little maiden, who answered to the name of Dollie, and who was the daughter of William Greyson. It was not in the least that she was an apprentice in her uncle's shop; what service she chose to give there she did.

When time ran heavy, and she got a little tired of her own society, then Dollie would flit into the shop, and take her turn in selling gloves over the counter; and it was notable that when Miss Greyson did take this business in hand the young bloods of York were apt to be rather lavish in their orders with regard to gloves and neckties. Dollie Greyson was staying with her uncle mainly for this reason: masters were attainable at York, which, of course, was not the case on Riddleton Moor, and, in spite of a somewhat questionable turf career, Bill Greyson loved his daughter very, very dearly, and was anxious, to use his own expression, that she should have the advantage of "the very best training" money could give her.

A slight, auburn-haired girl, just turned seventeen, Dollie Greyson was no more ignorant of her own attractions than her sisterhood generally. She knew that she was pretty, and she knew that she was nice, and that gentlemen rather appreciated having their gloves fitted by her; but of all her admirers there was, perhaps, none Dollie liked so well as young Gerald Rockingham, the heir of Cranley Chase. A perfectly boy-and-girl love, if you like, but schoolboys and schoolgirls, too, for the matter of that, catch the complaint, though not quite so sharply as their elders. From her antecedents it may easily be believed that Miss Greyson could ride, as they say, "above a bit." She had, in fact, lived in the saddle almost from childhood, and had been accustomed at home to ride all sorts of awkward animals. If there was one thing old Bill Greyson was proud of it was his daughter's witching horsemanship. He never seemed to recognise any danger to her on whatever he might put her, and was wont to say, when one of his charges turned awkward with the boys, "We'll just hand him over to Dollie for a month. He'll be quiet enough by that time, I'll warrant." We all know what the delicate hand of an accomplished horsewoman can make of a horse, and it really was marvellous how many of these unruly youngsters Dolly Greyson had succeeded in

teaching manners to. Now if there was one thing Miss Greyson missed in York it was her accustomed horse-exercise. Her uncle kept no horseflesh of any description, and the few opportunities she had of indulging her taste in that line had been through Gerald Rockingham. Gerald had more than once either hired or borrowed a horse, and taken the girl out for a day with the York and Ainstey, and the wild excitement of those gallops made Dollie's pulses tingle even now. Gerald in those cases acted as escort and pilot, and all the hunting-men had a kindly word for the heir of Cranley Chase and Dollie Greyson, the trainer's daughter, who both rode so straight and went so well. They were mere boy and girl at present, and it never occurred to Alister Rockingham, any more than it did to any other of the veterans of the hunt, that there might be a love romance springing up under their noses. Gerald at present ordered his fair companion about in that peculiarly off-hand fashion that young gentlemen of his age are wont to employ to girls of their own standing. He made no bones about calling her stupid, and was more apt to call her a little "duffer" than to sympathise with her when she got into trouble, though it must be at the same time added that he always stood loyally to Dollie in her misfortunes. Though he might permit himself to use the epithet of "duffer" when Miss Greyson met with mishap, yet to any one else Gerald would have given the flattest contradiction, and vowed there was never a girl in Yorkshire to compare with her.

It is high change at the shop in Coney Street, and Thomas Greyson, himself busy at the counting-desk, is doing a thriving trade the week after the big Doncaster race.

"Fifteen-and-six, Mr. Greyson, fifteen-and-six; that's what it cooms to. Just give me four-and-six out of the poound, and quits we are," said a rubieund burly Yorkshireman. "I suppose the old shop is joost running with ehampagne, and when you go to rest you simply wallow in sover-eigns. Your brother arn't served us up such a startler on

the Toon Moor for many a long year. I got the hint at the last moment myself, and a hoondred to seven once was good enough for this ehild. I'd a good race of it, and, what with drinking old Bill's health and Phaeton's, I'm a little foggy yet as to where we've got in the week."

"Mighty glad to hear it, Mr. Crofton. My brother, like yourself, had, I fancy, a pretty good race of it. At all events, he's given the girl there a pretty smart dress. Look at the little peacock fluttering her plumes around, and prinking herself out for the benefit of that young Rockingham. They do say," continued Mr. Greyson, in a low whisper, "that the Squire's dropped a power of brass over the race. In faet, they say there's no such heavy loser at Doncaster this year as him."

"Aye, I've heard as mooch, and sorry I was to hear it, too. He's one of the real soort is the Squire. A real good and straight sportsman, but he's always been a terrible bould better. It won't be the fust time he's burnt his fingers by many, I reckon."

Thomas Greyson shook his head in mute reply as he turned away to attend to another customer's account.

It must not be supposed from her uncle's remark that Dollie Greyson was a smartly-dressed eoquettish shop-girl. Trim and prettily attired she always was, and quiet and modest in her manner as if born a lady—very self-possessed; and, if the girl smiled at the gallant speeches occasionally made her, no one of Tom Greyson's customers would ever have thought of over-stepping the Rubieon with his niece. She was, men felt intuitively, not a young woman to talk slang to. Although only a trainer's daughter, well as she rode, and brought up much as she had been amongst horses, yet no one ever heard Dollie talk "horse," and in that one particular alone she was immensely in advance of maidens of far higher station than herself. If some of these damsels only knew the rubbish they do talk on that subject, and how they bore us, surely they would be more merciful.

A pretty golden-haired little girl, with the neatest of figures, tiniest of hands and feet, and longest of eyelashes, Dollie Greyson, as she stands at the counter, nominally turning over gloves for his inspection, but in reality chattering with Gerald Rockingham, by no means warrants the epithet of "little peacock" which her uncle has applied to her. She is attired in a soft grey serge, trimmed with braid to match, with snowy collar and cuffs. William Greyson, who loved his daughter better than anything in this world, had sent her, not a dress, but a very pretty cheque, "to buy fal-lals for herself," as he expressed it, wisely concluding that a girl's millinery was a little beyond his comprehension; though the old trainer was wont to asseverate, "I don't know how it's done; but, blame me, I do know whether they're turned out all right when I see 'em, and mean my girl to look as fit as any of 'em, I tell you."

Gerald is telling Miss Greyson all about the race, and relating with all a schoolboy's glee how he won twenty-eight pounds over Phaeton, and finally he produces from his pocket a little morocco case, and, handing it across the counter, says in a low voice:—

"You must wear that, Dollie, just to remind you of me and the cheery gallops we have had together."

"Oh, how lovely!" exclaimed the girl as she opened the case, drew from it a pretty diamond and emerald half-loop ring, and slipped it on her finger. "How good of you, Gerald; but what nonsense to think I should want anything to remind me of you! Is it likely?"

"I hope not. Say it's to remind you of Phaeton's Leger. Say it's an 'engaged' ring, if you like."

"If you talk like that, Gerald, I won't keep it," returned Dollie, her face flushing slightly and speaking seriously. "I like you very much, am very fond of you; but don't think I forget that you are a Rockingham of Cranley Chase, while I am," and here she gave a significant little shrug of her shoulders, "the daughter of William Greyson, the trainer.

Don't speak, Gerald, for a moment," she continued. "I'm just as fond and proud of my father as you can be of yours; but anything of that sort between us would be ridiculous. Good comrades ever, firm friends, if you will, dear Gerald; but not that last. Say it is so, or take back your ring."

"You're making too much fuss about it, Dollie," he replied; "it will be so some of these days all the same. You are as much a lady as any of the girls I meet in society, and much jollier. Never mind now, call the ring a remembrance of Phaeton; but think a little of me when you look at it."

"I shall do that, Gerald, without looking at it. When do you go to Cambridge?"

"In about three weeks. It's a short term, thank goodness! for I fancy University life is pretty dull at starting. You don't know many fellows, and one don't know the ropes; however, I believe it's all jolly good fun after a bit."

"But, Gerald, surely your people expect you to work a bit to try to take a degree, or something of that kind; though I don't quite understand what that means——"

"Nonsense, Dollie; fellows like me are not expected to go in for that sort of thing. We go up for a couple of years, just to make acquaintances and to be able to say we've been there. The dear old governor would be knocked into heaps at my taking a degree. He wouldn't mind it, you know; but he'd be awfully astonished. Phaeton's winning last Wednesday would be nothing to such a surprise as that."

"I thought it was what you were sent there to do," replied Dollie, simply. "I fancied you went to Cambridge to learn just as I came to York, only I fancied they tested you to see if you knew things, which they mercifully don't inflict on me. I do my best, but should have grievous fears of failure if tried."

"No; book-learning was never the *forte* of our family. We only pride ourselves upon some very minor virtues.

We are brought up to shoot straight, ride straight, and *run* straight. You know what I mean by the latter, Dollie. We stick to our friends and our word."

Miss Greyson was too country-bred a girl not to hold the first two of these virtues in considerable esteem, and she had seen with her own eyes that Gerald spoke truth about the riding, while, as for "the running straight," I think the most shifty, scheming, and mendacious of our fellows have a certain admiration for a man who does that.

"Yes, Gerald," she said, softly; "nobody in these parts ever doubts a Roekingham, but for all that I think you ought to work at Cambridge."

"You'd make a charming tutor, Dollie," he replied, laughing, "and perhaps under your auspices I might. Byron, I remember, somewhere advocates female teachers. Shall I find you here when I come back in December?"

"No; they'll want me home for Christmas. Father would be very much put out if I wasn't there at that time."

"And your mother, too, I suppose?"

"Well," replied the girl, laughing, "she'll be glad to have me back, no doubt, but she don't think half as much of me as father. He never says a cross word to me, but mother can give me a bit of her mind when I don't please her. In short," continued Dollie, merrily, "father pets and spoils me, and mother does her best to counteract it."

"Then I shan't see you for ever so long?" said Gerald, somewhat moodily.

"Oh, yes you will. I shall be back in January time. You will have plenty of opportunities to take me for a gallop or two with the hounds, if your highness will condescend to be kind as of yore. And now, Gerald, you really must run away. If every young man was as long buying his gloves as you have been the business of this establishment would never be carried on. Good-bye," she concluded, extending a tiny hand, "and thank you so much for the ring."

Gerald shook hands, and then walked moodily off to the

Black Swan in search of his hack. He was getting very much in love with Dollie Greyson, which was more than that young lady at present was with him. She liked him very much, was fond of him in a sort of half-sisterly fashion; but a girl of seventeen is years older in reality than a youth a few months older than herself; and this was just Dollie's case. She was not a bit in love with Gerald, and saw quite clearly it would be ridiculous on her part ever to be so. She recognised quite clearly the great difference of their stations in life, and knew that she could never be his wife. A bright, quick-witted, warm-hearted, impetuous little lady, but with plenty of sound, practical common-sense. She may display plenty of romance and imagination later on should her affections be touched, but at present, despite her impetuosity, Dollie is a clear-sighted girl.

CHAPTER III.

CRANLEY CHASE.

THERE were few more picturesque old mansions in the valley of the Ouse than Cranley Chase, the seat of the Rockinghams. They had not come in with the Conquest, or acquired their lands in the spoliation of the monasteries under Henry VIII.; their presence in Yorkshire was of later date, and somewhat more prosaic in its cause. The first of the family that had appeared at Cranley was one of Marlborough's favourite lieutenants, who had received his humble share of the honours and wealth that accrued to his great commander. The founder of the Churchills, it is true, was not wont to let money trickle through his fingers for the benefit of his subordinates; but Colonel Rockingham thought he could not better show his admiration for his great chief than by closely imitating him. Like his principal, he was

reckless in battle and ruthless in plunder. But his great stroke of good fortune was when, thanks to his handsome person and the influence of his patron, he succeeded in winning the hand of pretty Mistress Hazelby, the great Yorkshire heiress. She brought to Colonel Rockingham Cranley Chase and many fat acres in the valley of the Ouse; and when, the wars over, the Colonel settled comfortably down as a Yorkshire Squire, he was soon intimate with all the gentlemen of the country side.

The Chase, which stands about five miles from York, a little to the right of the Great North Road, is an old Elizabethan red-brick house, a perfect incongruous mass of wings and gables. A fairly big house apparently to start with, to which each succeeding Rockingham felt it incumbent on himself to add a wing. It stood in a fine old park of some two-fifty or three hundred acres, studded with old oak and elm. That the greater part was as draughty and uncomfortable as all such fine old family-seats invariably are need scarcely be mentioned; but the modernised wing, chiefly inhabited by the family when they were alone, was exceedingly comfortable. When Alister Rockingham entertained right royally, as he was wont to do for the York Races, the York Balls, and such like occasions of festivity, then the old house was full from garret to cellar, and the latter, despite the fierce inroads made on it at such times, held bravely out. Cranley claret was proverbial, and Cranley port and Madeira pronounced by no means bad to take. On such occasions the big drawing-room and dining-room were thrown open, and, in taking his party up to the Knavesmire, Alister Rockingham was wont to be as regal as that traditional Nabob, who exclaimed, "Bring some more carriages."

Still, before the Phaeton Leger it had been for some little time rumoured that Alister Rockingham was in trouble; but the Squire kept a stiff upper lip, and abated not an iota of his accustomed hospitality, and people doubted whether there was any truth in these reports. It is possible to go on for

some time after you are ruined if you conceal all symptoms of the catastrophe, and for a man who has indubitably possessed property, and who is vaguely rumoured to have lost it, to be pronounced insolvent, shows much indiscretion on his part.

Poor Alistar Rockingham ! there was something more than pecuniary troubles the matter with him. He had "lived his life," as it is called,—ay, every inch of it; had flung the dice at "The Rooms" in Doncaster boldly, as he had backed favourites on the Town Moor. He had lived a fast pace in London in the season; had buttoned up his kid gloves tightly as he called for a fresh lot of blue counters in the Cocoa Tree on a Saturday night to try that last desperate expedient of a *beau-joueur*, the redeeming a bad week at Epsom or Newmarket, by the throwing in half-a-dozen mains running. He might have said with perfect truth:—

I have lived my life—I am nearly done,
I have played the game all round;
But I freely admit that the best of my fun
I owe it to horse and hound.

It was not only, poor fellow, that his fortune was nearly spent, but Alistar Rockingham felt that his life also was nearly spent. There are signs at certain periods of a man's existence when he feels intuitively that the clock is running rapidly down. There may be nothing radically the matter, but he realises the fact that the hour-glass will admit of little more turning; and it was with a heavy heart that he drove home to Cranley Chase at the end of the week destined to be known in Doncaster annals henceforth as Phaeton's Leger. It was a bitter feeling to the man as he swept up through the fine old park, and his eye ranged over the wide undulating grass-land and gnarled old oaks, to know that it was all gone, and that when his will came to be read his son would find himself a beggar. But broad acres however numerous, or broad pieces however many, are speedily got

through when a man takes to gambling in earnest. Alister Rockingham had no very great right to complain; he had had a very fair innings, had some big strokes of luck certainly in the earlier part of his career; and, though things had gone against him latterly, it had taken him twenty years to get through his inheritance. It was done now, and the Squire of Cranley Chase recognised that Phaeton's Leger had finally ruined him.

He had an awkward task before him, and he knew it. Wild he had been, gambler he had been, but no other woman had ever compared in his eyes to his wife Beatrice, and to a great extent she shared his confidence. She knew they were in difficulties; she knew things had been going badly with him of late, but she did not know how desperate his affairs were.

She had done her best to dissuade him from going to Doncaster, knowing how costly such holidays had been of late, and he was painfully aware there would be much anxious questioning as to how he had fared in the fray. As he expected, Mrs. Rockingham met the Squire the minute he entered the hall. She knew the face too well not to understand that he brought no good news home.

"I'm afraid, Alister, that it has been, as it always seems to be of late, an unfortunate time with you. But there is no need to speak about it now. You look fagged, and it will be quite time to tell me all about it, if you choose, after dinner, dear."

She was a gentle-hearted, clever woman, and knew well that the male creature was wont to make confession of his difficulties in his post-prandial moments. Dinner over, the Squire, having finished a bottle of champagne, began to take a somewhat brighter view of his Doncaster reverses. He even half-persuaded himself that things were by no means so bad as he had at first thought them.

"Yes, Beatrice," he said, "it has been an awkward week. Who could think that old villain William Greyson rejoiced

in the possession of two horses, either of them good enough to win the Leger? I knew nothing about Phaeton, and backed Caterham, of course, as all the world did. I went from bad to worse all Thursday, and a plunge to get home on the Cup didn't mend matters."

"It's unlucky, Alister, because I know money is scarce with us just now, and I hear that you have sent for Pearson, which is always an ominous sign. Still," she continued, with a faint smile, "it is no use crying over spilt milk, as I have heard you say so often; but, Alister dear, if you could refrain from racing in future I think you would be a great deal happier, and at all events you would please me so very much."

"Well, Trixie, I think," rejoined Alister Rockingham, with a rather grim smile, "I may safely promise you that for the future you need have little fear of my giving up racing—it has given me up. As Rochefoucauld says, 'When our vices have left us we flatter ourselves that *we* have left them.'"

At this moment the door opened, and in burst Gerald Rockingham, his bright, dark, handsome face glowing with high spirits. I don't know whether I have quite described Gerald. He took after his mother, who was one of those *petite* brunettes that tall fair-haired men of the Saxon stamp so delight in marrying. When Swedenborg wrote volumes to prove his doctrine of the affinities he might have condensed the whole thing into the one short sentence—that men and women are very apt to fall in love with their antithesis. Gerald was small and slight in stature, but for all that the boy had inherited all the hereditary pluck of his family, whether on battlefield or at card-table. He understood, to speak metaphorically, "how to die and make no sign." He was all wire and whipcord, and would have no more thought of flinching from the biggest fence of the York and Ainstey country than he would from standing up to a man of double his size who had insulted him. There had

never been a Rockingham who couldn't both ride and shoot straight, and Gerald certainly promised to prove no exception to the traditions of his race.

"Oh, mother, darling!" exclaimed the boy, as he threw his arms round her neck, "I begin to think there's nothing like racing. I don't know when I have had such a jolly time as I have had this week. I've won twenty-eight pounds, which wasn't so bad, you know, for a young one. It's the most glorious sport in the world—and isn't Bill Greyson clever? Think of his having those two horses in the race, and selling the public all round by winning by the one they didn't believe in!"

A shiver ran over Mrs. Rockingham's face as she thought how her son was already developing a passion for a sport which had so sorely embittered her own life, while I am afraid Alister Rockingham with difficulty gulped down the execration that rose to his lips at this encomium on Bill Greyson's cleverness.

"How was it you didn't come home with me, Gerald?" he inquired. "I looked for you at the station, but saw nothing of you."

"No, father: I left a little before you. I'm not a swell, like you, who waits for the Monday to gather his winnings—I got mine at once, and I wanted to stop in York to buy something for Dollie Greyson. She is such a jolly girl, you know, and as it is her father to whom I'm virtually indebted for the money I thought it was the proper thing to do. She is staying with her uncle in Coney Street."

"Ah! It's not so long ago," said Alister Rockingham, musingly, "since that distinguished patron of the turf who notoriously never bets wagered the famous sixpence with his trainer's wife against his horse winning the Leger. He paid it set in a magnificent pearl and diamond bracelet, which always remained one of her proudest possessions. I'm curious to know what you gave *your* trainer's daughter?"

"Why I gave her a ring, father, which took about half

my money to buy ; but then, you know, she's far away the prettiest girl in these parts, and rides as well as I do. Why, you've seen her out hunting yourself ! ”

“ Yes,” replied his father, “ I know Miss Greyson by sight. A pretty little thing, and, as you say, she can ride. But, Gerald, remember I want no nonsense either one way or the other between you and old Bill Greyson's daughter.”

“ You can trust me, father,” replied Gerald, proudly. “ If you knew Dollie you would know she would not even come here as my wife without your consent and mother's.”

As Gerald continued to tell his mother the story of his week's doings, as was his habit, the Squire fell into a sombre reverie. His son's triumph recalled to him those days of his youth when fortune smiled on him, whether he gambled for love or for money, and he winees sadly when he thinks what is to be Gerald's fate, whom he feels will have shortly to confront the world, not as he himself began it, but with a mere trifle of money at his back.

At this moment the door opened, and Miss Rockingham (the Squire's only daughter) quietly entered the room. It was somewhat curious, but Ellen Rockingham, who was some two or three years older than her brother, was utterly different to the rest of the family in all her tastes and pursuits. Dark in complexion, like her brother, and considerably taller, she regarded such things as hunting, shooting, and racing with disdain. She had already made up her mind that life was a thing to be treated in earnest, and was that somewhat unpleasant type—a young lady with a mission. She was convinced that the rich did not half do their duty by their poorer brethren. She meant well, poor young woman, but contrived to make life very bitter to some of the necessitous peasantry round Cranley. It is bad enough to have a difficulty about earning your bread, and comes terribly hard to a good many people in this world, but it is harder still to be told that the absence of the quartern loaf is owing to your own want of energy and thrift, Miss

Rockingham was wont to be rather more lavish of rebuke than largesse, and the impecunious cottagers under the Cranley sceptre infinitely preferred the sight of the Squire's wife to that of the Squire's daughter.

"Sorry, Ellen, that you weren't here to welcome me at dinner."

"You know, father, it was school-night, and that is a duty I am very loth to neglect."

A parlous evening did some of these young rustics pass at times with Miss Rockingham. She had all the pluck and pride of her race, and was a rigid disciplinarian.

The Squire, to tell the truth, stood just a little in awe of his daughter. He was puzzled at times to understand how any daughter of his could have taken up these peculiar views. He would have about as soon thought of confiding his troubles or confessing his peccadilloes to the clergyman of his parish as to Ellen. His son was too young, and if he only half whispered his troubles to his wife it was simply because he could not bear to pain her.

"I don't want to interfere with your views of right or wrong, Ellen," he rejoined a little sharply; "but I think most girls, when their father had been away from home for ten days, would have been there to welcome him home, and not allowed such rubbish as a 'night-school' to interfere with their doing so."

"I am sorry—very sorry," rejoined the girl, as she came over and kissed him; "I would not have been out of the way for one moment if I had supposed you would have felt in that way about it. I try hard to do what I consider right. I have read and thought a good deal for myself, and I know I don't hold quite the same views as you and dear mother, but you surely know that I am in no way wanting in love for either of you? If I have done wrong, forgive me."

"Pooh! nonsense, girl!" rejoined the Squire, completely melted, as he kissed his daughter affectionately. "Don't

say another word about it, but go and get your dinner at once."

"Thanks, father, but I don't want any. I had some dinner at the Rectory."

"Dinner at the Rectory! Child, absurd! They never dine there—they only eat! Go and do as I tell you."

CHAPTER IV.

DOLLIE AT HOME.

WHAT they call a "Moor" down in the "West Countree" means a large expanse of open ground, plentifully sprinkled with gorse and heather; what they call a moor in Scotland means pretty much the same thing, with rather less gorse and a good deal more heather; but in Yorkshire they have moors, and moors,—the one corresponding to those of Scotland, the other more closely resembling the downs of the southern counties. Riddleten Moor was one of the latter description, and over its springy turf many a famous race-horse had been prepared for his engagement.

Standing on its edge was a many-gabled, comfortable-looking farmhouse, roomy undoubtedly, neither tiled nor slated, but thatched in the old-fashioned way; but all kept as neat and trimly as it could possibly be. Some hardy erecpcrs were trained about the walls, and interlaced themselves over the old-fashioned porch. A square garden laid in front of the place, the conspicuous feature of which was a large and old-fashioned grass-plat, with a fine old oak-tree in the centre. Wondrous handicap *coups* and manifold racing schemes had been talked over beneath the branches of that old oak. William Greyson was accounted clever of fence in all matters of turf policy; but he had of late years achieved the distinction of being rather too astute in the

management of horses. Like many a better man, he was suffering in a great measure for the sins of others. His principal employers were men whose only canon on the race-course was "make money," and who would have quite pooh-poohed the old rider of "honestly, if you can." Greyson had, of course, to carry out the instructions of his employers, and their views were simply that their horses should win or lose, simply as best suited their betting-books. It is only in puritanical human nature that the employed refuse to comply with the instructions of their employers. Greyson was no particular saint, he dropped quietly into the groove assigned to him, and thought he might just as well make money as Cuthbert Elliston and Sam Pearson, and the consequence was that the stable's reputation was now of the shadiest.

A little past eight on a bright October morning, and Dollie, looking as fresh as a rose, emerges from the porch, walks to the garden-gate, and glances up the road leading to the Moor, to see if there are any signs of her father. She hadn't long to wait before the slight, wiry frame of the trainer, astride of his pet cob, was seen making his way leisurely home.

"It's a treat, Dollie, to have you back again, and find you waiting breakfast for me," said Greyson, as he reined his cob up at the gate for a moment. "Run in, child, and brew the tea; for I'm as hungry as a hunter. I shall be in as soon as ever I've taken Blucher round to the stable."

"All right, father," replied the girl; "breakfast will be ready all for you in ten minutes. I hope the work went on all satisfactorily?"

"Satisfactory!" said Mr. Greyson, rather bitterly; "I think the Dancing Master will about break my heart. Here have I got the best horse in England, and I can't get a boy to sit on him; but I'll tell you all about it when I come in, child."

A real Yorkshire breakfast is a thing to sit down to for

those rejoicing in a healthy appetite, and the table at Riddleton Grange was very amply furnished. Dollie presided there in her mother's absence, for Mrs. Greyson was somewhat of an invalid, and rarely, when Dollie was at home to make the tea for her, came down stairs until the last possible moment. A few minutes, and William Greyson enters the room. A keen, shrewd face, clear grey eyes; the look of a man, indeed, that a shrewd judge of physiognomy would hold you are not likely to get the better of; and, unless report belied him, there were not many who had ever had the best of William Greyson. He walked up to the top of the table, kissed his daughter, and smoothed her bright golden tresses; for if there was one thing the trainer prized in this world it was his daughter.

"And so, father, the Dancing Master has been tiresome this morning. Why, that iron-grey colt is the handsomest you've got in training, or have had for a long while. You'll have to let me try my hand at him after all."

"God forbid, child! He got Joe Butters down this morning; and you know I don't much like putting Joe up, on account of his weight, except in dire extremity; he's rather too heavy."

"Yes," replied Dollie, laughing; "you see he has such an excellent appetite."

"Excellent appetite!" replied her father querulously, as he proceeded to make short work of a dish of fried ham and eggs. "Ain't I always telling them that nothing about a racing-stable has a right to have an appetite but the horses? As for the bipeds, they can't be too strict in their abstinence. Joe Butters is the victim of gluttony. Who can say what position he might have taken in his profession if he could have put any restraint on himself? But, with his passion for corned beef and old ale, no wonder he outgrew his opportunities."

"But, father, you know Joe's a real good boy."

"Of course he is," replied the trainer; "but just think how

much better he'd have been if he had been a couple of stone lighter." And as he spoke the trainer proceeded to help himself to some game-pie.

"And you really believe in the Dancing Master, father?"

"Undoubtedly I do, as much as it is possible to believe in a colt with such a fiendish temper. But you know what they are, Dollie; there's no doing anything with women or horses when they exhibit uncontrollable temper."

"Libel, father—rank libel! When women and horses prove uncontrollable it is in nineteen cases out of twenty the result of ill-treatment. Take them properly, and you can make them do anything. I'd wager my best frock to a new hat that the Dancing Master and I get on together."

"Nonsense, child!" replied Greyson, sharply. "I've put you up on some awkward ones before now, and you *can* ride," he continued, proudly, "but I'm not going to risk your life on the back of the Dancing Master."

"Never mind, father dear. I'm not preferring any request. We don't show to much advantage when we are kicked off; and, in spite of my braggadocio, I should probably share the fate of the others.—Ah! good morning, mother. We put the tea down by the fire to keep warm for you; and now what shall I get you for breakfast?"

Mrs. Greyson, in sooth, was somewhat of a trial to her husband—it was not altogether her fault; but continuous ill-health is wont to sour ordinary tempers, and Mrs. Greyson was apt to be a little waspish in her remarks about things generally. She could not get about to see after things herself as she had done in days of yore, and, had she been allowed her way, would have kept Dollie at home as her vice-regent. But William Greyson was much too proud of his daughter to stand this sort of thing, and insisted that she should go into York and have the best "training" money could buy her. No man who is not a thorough autocrat is of much use at the head of a racing-stable, and William Greyson was not only that, but thoroughly master in his own house as well,

and his wife was quite aware of the fact that when he really had made up his mind there was no disputing it.

"The butter's not quite what it ought to be," said Mrs. Greyson, querulously. "Now you *are* at home, and not taking lessons on the piano, or flirting about your uncle's shop, you might keep an eye on the dairy."

"I don't think there's much fault to find," replied Dollie, cheerfully. "Jeanie knows her work well, and requires little supervision."

"Don't fret yourself, wife," said William Greyson. "You can't get about now to see after things, of course; but you taught them all their work in the days you could so thoroughly that the domestic machine runs pretty smooth now."

"Very good of you to say so, William; but I can see plenty of shortcomings, though I *can't* get about to see after them now-a-days."

Mrs. Greyson was a little hard on her husband, and even her friends, in this respect. She undoubtedly suffered from ill-health, and, after the manner of many invalids, she persistently dangled this fact before their eyes as if it were a virtue.

Under the tree in front of the house in the meantime might have been observed in conversation the offending Jeanie and Joe Butters, the head lad of Greyson's stables, a short, sturdily-built man of seven or eight-and-twenty.

"Jeanie, my dear," he observed, "you look uncommon nice, you do, this morning. You're as plump as a partridge, and that's a real virtue in your sex, while for us men, especially when we have to do with racing, it becomes quite criminal."

"Well, Mr. Butters, you know you're not near as stout as you were. It's very odd that we should take such different views of things. You say that you don't like a girl to be too thin, but, mercy on us! *I* live in perpetual fright of losing my waist. But you look tired. Suppose you come into the dairy, and I'll give you a glass of fresh milk."

"There now, that's just where it is; if there's one thing I should like it would be a draught of fresh milk, and to ascertain exactly how far it is round that waist of yours; but, bless you, milk means blubber, and when you give up your mind to horses you can't afford that sort of thing. Tired indeed! I should rather think I was. That grey brute has put me down once, ran away with me twice, and blessed near pulled my arms out this morning. A nice article to keep on the premises, he is. I wish he'd kill somebody at once, and have done with it."

"Oh, lor, Mr. Butters! Don't talk in that way. Why you know it would be more likely to be you than anybody else. Of course they hand him over to you because, as we all know, you're the best rider in the stables."

"Well, my dear," said Butters in the most patronising way, "I know I'm not so dusty, and if it wasn't for my disgusting weight I'd pretty soon let 'em see at Newmarket what I can do—but that Dancing Master—oh, Lord! Come in, Jeanie, and get me a mug of ale."

Joe Butters, having given up his weight as a problem utterly beyond his own control, confined himself now simply to severe abstinence from such saccharine matter as he had no particular craving for. Milk in the morning was a thing that Mr. Butters admired from a very abstract point of view; he took much credit to himself for his abstention in such little things, but before he strolled off to his own quarters I'm afraid there were two or three little matters that he had solved thoroughly to his own mind—namely, that the Riddleton Grange ale had not deteriorated, and that it was quite possible to get his arm comfortably round Jeanie's waist.

"Dollie!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Greyson, "may I ask how you came by such a ring as that?"

"Certainly," replied the girl, as she drew it from her finger and handed it across to her mother. "Mr. Gerald Rockingham gave it me *directly*, and you, father, gave it me

indirectly. He bought it for me out of the money he won over Phaeton's Leger."

Bill Greyson couldn't refrain from a slight start at his daughter's speech. No one knew better than he what had happened to the Squire of Cranley Chaso over that race.

"He was so pleased, father—exulted so much in his winnings, that he insisted on giving it me as a memento of landing his first stake."

"A more costly stake, perhaps, never was won," muttered Greyson to himself. "He's a chip of the old block, Dollie, and has begun early, like his father before him; but I think it would have been better for the Squire if he'd never set foot on a racecourse. There's wildish blood in all these Rockinghams, and that sort as a rule don't make good gamblers."

"You don't mean, father, that Mr. Rockingham lost a great deal of money at Doncaster, do you?"

"Yes, my girl, that's about what it comes to. It was hard, but it's not altogether my fault; as a thorough sportsman and belonging to the county, I tried all I could to make them give him a hint; however, they wouldn't do so, and as it chanced I never had an opportunity myself."

"That, then, I suppose, will come very hard on Gerald?" rejoined Dollie, opening her large grey eyes to their fullest extent.

"Yes; that and a few similar scrapes that the Squire has got into," replied her father, drily.

"I am very, very sorry," replied the girl, gravely "It almost makes me dislike my ring. I feel quite grieved Gerald should have spent so much of his money on it."

"You needn't distress yourself much on that account," replied her father "That amount will make very little difference to what I am afraid last Doncaster cost the Squire." And with this observation the trainer strolled out of the room.

"What age is young Mr. Rockingham?" inquired Mrs. Greyson.

"Just a few months older than myself," said Dollic; "he's going to the University," and then she quietly followed her father's example, and left the room. She had no fancy for talking about Gerald Rockingham to her mother.

CHAPTER V.

DEATH OF THE SQUIRE.

A COLD January day, and the bitter north-east wind swirled through the avenues of Cranley Chase, making the old oaks creak again. In the principal street of the little village men stopped each other, despite the keenness of the weather, to ask what was the news from the great house; for all Cranley knew that the lord of the Chase lay dying. The village doctor had said openly at the Rockingham Arms that it was a question now not of days but of hours. The famous London physician had been down, at Gerald's earnest request, only to shake his head solemnly, and say that there was no more to be done. On the Squire's family his mortal sickness came like a thunderbolt: but it was no surprise to Alister Rockingham himself, who had long been conscious that life's machinery was giving way: for himself he could have turned his face to the wall and met his doom calmly; but his end was terribly embittered at the thought of those he was about to leave behind. He knew very well what little provision there would be for them, and felt that it was he himself who had steered the ship upon the breakers. It may be doubted whether even Alister Rockingham himself was aware of how utterly ruined he really was. He did as men sometimes do under such circumstances,—sent for his solicitor, Mr. Pearson, and his cousin, Cuthbert Elliston, in the vague hope that they might devise some salvage out of the wreck; and very shortly after their arrival

the Squire breathed his last, confiding the interests of those nearest and dearest to him—had he only known it—to the very two men who might, an they willed, have saved him.

It is the day after the funeral. Alister Rockingham had been laid to his rest with all due pomp and ceremony in the old churchyard where so many of his race lie sleeping. His tenantry and the villagers—who, indeed, may all be included in the former category, as Cranley for the most part belonged to him—have stared their hardest at the sombre pageantry, and many of them shed tears at the grave-side of one who, reckless as he may have been of his own affairs, had always proved a kind landlord.

Seated in the library of the Chase were Samuel Pearson, solicitor, and Cuthbert Elliston. On the table between them stood a decanter of sherry and a plate of biscuits.

"Well, poor Alister has gone at last," said Elliston. "I suppose you've got the will there all ready to read to the widow and her children?"

"Yes," rejoined Pearson; "just as he backed horses when they had no chance to win, so he made his will when he had no money to leave."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes," returned Pearson; "the old place is mortgaged down to the conservatory; the house to the top rafter."

"You must have feathered your nest pretty well," observed Cuthbert, with a sneer.

"D——n it, Mr. Elliston, I'll not stand such language from *you*; as if you hadn't had your share of the cake."

"Chut! man; keep your temper. We are not children who, having eaten the kernel, quarrel over the shells. I suppose that last Leger about finished him."

"Yes; the poor Squire would have it that Caterham must win. You, I, Bill Greyson, and Broughton, the bookmaker, thought he couldn't, and when we think they can't win——"

"They generally don't," interrupted Elliston; "which

shows what good judges we are, especially when they are in our stable. I suppose the widow will have to go?"

"Yes; Cranley Chase must come to the hammer, and there will be a very slender income left for Mrs. Rockingham to live upon."

"And that young cub will have to turn out and get his own living?"

"That's so. You don't like that boy, Mr. Elliston; but he's popular with the people about, and few of them would call him a young cub."

"I hate the whelp, and I don't care who knows it. I hate his mother—she always distrusted me, and taught him to do the same."

"I don't know that she was altogether wrong to do that," observed Pearson, musingly.

"Confound it, sir, what do you mean?"

"I thought we weren't to quarrel. I've just sent word to Mrs. Rockingham to say that I want to see her on business, and she has replied she will be here in a few minutes."

The words had hardly left his lips when the door opened, and the widow, attired in her sable draperies, and accompanied by her daughter, entered the room.

"I have here," said Pearson, "your lamented husband's last will and testament, but it is my painful duty to inform you that he died a ruined man, and that I can see no possibility of averting the sale of Cranley Chase."

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald, where are you?" exclaimed the sorrow-stricken woman. "I cannot understand it all! Oh, my son, come and talk to these men for me!"

"I am here, mother," said Gerald, who had entered the room noiselessly just in time to overhear his mother's last words; "what do you want of me?"

"It has been my painful duty," interposed Pearson, "to explain to Mrs. Rockingham the true position of her affairs—to break to her, in short, the sad fact of her ruin, and that Mrs. Rockingham should be very much upset at hearing it is

only natural; but the truth had to be broken to her sooner or later, and I thought it more judicious that she should know of it at once."

"And I think Pearson's right," broke in Elliston. "It's no use shilly-shallying when an ugly story is to be told. It's a bad business, Beatrice, but you will have henceforth to face the world with very narrow means; while, as for you, Gerald," he continued, almost brutally, "this means an end of Cambridge. I don't suppose you'll be doing much good there; you'll have to turn to now and get your own living."

"That is my business," retorted Gerald, sharply. "Neither my mother nor myself are likely to consult *you* about our affairs."

"You're surely not mean enough to think of living on her?" sneered Cuthbert.

"Certainly not," answered Gerald, his eyes sparkling with passion. "But it's nothing to you how I propose to earn my bread and cheese."

"Well," rejoined Elliston, as if bent upon irritating the boy, "you can ride and shoot—there never was a Rockingham that couldn't. I should suggest your turning under-gamekeeper or pad-groom."

Gerald sprang forward, and had not his sister caught him by the arm, and Mr. Pearson thrown himself in front of Elliston, the youth would undoubtedly have struck him.

"Do control your temper," said Ellen Rockingham, and for a few seconds more the young fellow's eyes flashed, and the veins in his forehead stood out. Then with a violent effort he controlled himself, and said with sarcastic courtesy:—

"Thank you for your advice. In the meantime, as I presume for the next few days Cranley Chase is still ours, allow me to point out that neither my mother nor myself are in the mood to entertain visitors at present." And as he concluded Gerald motioned significantly to the door. A furious scowl came over Elliston's face, and for a moment he

seemed disposed to break out into a torrent of recrimination, but finally followed the example of his young cousin, and rejoined :

“ Good-bye, I wish you success in either of your new vocations.”

Pearson gathered up his papers, and as he followed his companion out of the room whispered in his ear :

“ If that wasn’t a direct hint to go, I never got one.”

“ I mistrust that man, Gerald dear,” said Mrs. Roekingham. “ He detests you, and I’m sure that he led poor Alister into many of his more serious scrapes. Whenever they went racing together your poor father always lost.”

“ And my cousin Cuthbert ? ” inquired Gerald.

“ I don’t know. No one, I fancy, ever knew much about his affairs, but I have a suspicion that your poor father paid for him many a time when things went against him.”

“ You need not fear my making him my confidant,” said Gerald. “ He has always disliked me from my boyhood.”

Mr. Gerald Roekingham would have been mightily offended had any one presumed to hint that was still not quite over.

“ But, Gerald,” interposed Ellen, “ you surely have no idea of turning groom or gamekeeper ? Of course, we must do our duty in that state of life into which it has pleased God to call us, but anything of that sort would be so very humiliating for a Roekingham ! ”

She had her mission, and her own ideas of doing good, but under no circumstances must there be any debasement of the family name.

“ No, Ellen,” said Gerald, as he wound his arm round her waist, “ I don’t, of course, know what I am going to do yet, but I don’t suppose I shall turn my attention to either of those pursuits. Still it is very difficult to get something to do when you have been brought up to do nothing. I’m not a clever fellow, you know, and it’s rather difficult to say to what I could turn my hand. Of course, mother, we shall have to leave Cranley Chase, but they are sure to give us

decent time to arrange that. The sale of a big landed property is not managed in a moment. When you and Ellen are comfortably settled somewhere then I shall begin to look about me."

The boy seemed transformed; the knowledge of the loss of his inheritance seemed to have made a man of him. Already he was facing the situation in the way men, if they have any "grit" in them, *do* face ruin.

"It comes hard upon you, Gerald," said Mrs. Rockingham, as she kissed him: "but remember I could never bear to hear a word against your father."

"As if I would ever utter one against him. He was the *beau idéal* of a Yorkshire gentleman. And, if the old place is gone, why we must just make the best of it. Do you think, mother dear, that Pearson has been quite honest in his dealings?"

"I cannot say. Your poor father placed implicit reliance upon him, especially in all cases of raising money."

"I shall ride into York to-morrow, and ask Mr. Writson to act for me in the settlement of our affairs. He has the reputation of being an honest man, and, though I don't suppose he can do much for us, yet he may be able to save something for us out of the wreck. There are one or two people I want to see besides."

The one or two people that Gerald wanted to see besides might have been condensed into Dollie Greyson, whom he found had just returned to her uncle's after spending her Christmas holidays at Riddleton Grange.

The next day accordingly saw Gerald riding into York. Mr. Writson, a shrewd able lawyer, gave him but cold comfort. He said he should be happy to do his best, but was afraid that Mr. Pearson had only too accurate a knowledge of the Squire's embarrassments. "Indeed, sir," he continued, "I regret to say that it has been rumoured for some time that Mr. Rockingham was in difficulties. However, as I said before, if you wish me to act for you I will."

That point satisfactorily settled, Gerald made the best of his way to Coney Street. Dollie was not in the shop, and, walking straight up to her uncle, Gerald asked if he could see her. He had so often taken the girl out riding that there was nothing unusual in this request, and Thomas Greyson replied at once,

“Yes: you’ll find her in the sitting-room upstairs.”

He found Dollie busy at the piano. She turned round when she heard the door open, and exclaimed, holding out her hand,—

“Oh, Gerald, I am so glad to see you again, and I am so sorry for you besides, for, of course, we have all heard of your loss.”

“Yes, though not perhaps the whole of it. I have come to say good-bye to you. When I put that ring on your finger last September, and wanted you to consider it an engaged ring, I honestly meant it. I looked forward in a few years to making you my wife. But it has all altered now. I am simply ruined. Whether you would have said ‘Yes’ I can’t say; but I only know that as soon as ever I came of age I should have asked you to marry me.”

“And if you had been the heir of Cranley Chase I think I should have said ‘No,’ although I love you very dearly; but now I am yours, whatever your position in life may be, whenever you come to claim me.”

“Ah, Dollie,” he replied, gravely, “you don’t know how complete a wreck it is. What is left will barely support my mother and sister, and how I am to get my own living I really don’t know, unless I follow the advice that brute Cuthbert Elliston gave me. He told me I’d better turn pad-groom or gamekeeper. And it’s bitterly true, Dollie. I *can* shoot and I *can* ride, but I think I like riding best.”

“Can ride!” cried the girl with sparkling eyes; “I should think you can! You remember the famous day when you got leave to take me to Askham Bogg. What a day we had; but splashed, torn, and dishevelled as I was, we *did* see the

finish of that run by hook or by crook, and there were many good men of the hunt who didn't."

"Ah! well, Dollie, I suppose I'd best go for pad-groom, or something of that kind."

"Stop; I have an idea. Listen to me. You have often laughed, and said what a practical little woman I am. If you turn groom, Gerald, you'll remain a groom all your life; and, though I'll be your wife all the same, I don't want that for your sake. Come into father's stable. He's a hard master, I know; but you will at all events see me a little, and I can, perhaps, make things easy for you. Father will do anything for me. Remember stable-boys become jockeys, and jockeys in these days make fortunes."

"But wouldn't he recognise me?"

"No. Your father has not trained with mine for many years. I know he never saw you at Doncaster last year; and even if he has seen you once or twice he will never recognise the heir of Cranley Chase in the stable-boy seeking a situation. But I shall, Gerald, dear."

"By Heavens! I'll try it, Dollie."

CHAPTER VI.

RIDDLETON MOOR.

ABOUT three months have elapsed since Gerald made up his mind to follow Dollie Greyson's advice. Both men and horses are pretty busy upon Riddleton Moor this March morning, for the racing season is now in full swing, and the trainer knows that his charges are wanted just as often as he can get them ready. William Greyson's is not a large stable; still he has a tolerable good string, there being some sixteen or eighteen horses doing their work on the Moor this morning, some taking walking exercise in their sheets, some

of them, divested of their clothing, doing good steady canters at different distances. But the whole excitement of the morning seemed centred in a group of three horses, which are evidently preparing for a good strong gallop, and what particularly attracted attention to them were the vagaries of a slashing iron-grey colt, the mounting of which even seemed no easy matter. As for the unfortunate boy destined for the top of that colt's back, he evidently looked forward to no pleasant ride. This was the Dancing Master, a magnificent three-year old, but afflicted with a most uncontrollable temper. That the boy was thrown into the saddle was a matter of course; but the Dancing Master apparently deeply resented the indignity: he lashed out twice wickedly; but the two or three people about him understood him much too well not to have kept well clear of his heels. His young rider, although a good deal shaken in his seat, managed to stick on, and then the Dancing Master condescended to walk quietly after his two stable-companions.

"Now, Donaldson," said Greyson, addressing the leading boy, who was mounted on a rich dark chestnut horse, "you know what I want: a strongish pace for the first three-quarters of a mile, and then brush them [up a bit the last two furlongs. Now then; off you go."

The horses jumped off, but that wasn't all; for the Dancing Master immediately indulged in two tremendous plunges, and his boy was jumped off too. The horse seemed perfectly satisfied with his achievement, for he remained quietly shaking his head, and made no attempt to follow his companions, who promptly stopped at Greyson's emphatic shout to them to pull up.

"Confound you!" muttered the trainer, almost shaking his fist at the horse as he caught him by the bridle. "What an unnatural brute you are! When you know you can run clean away from anything in the stable, why don't you go and do it, instead of indulging in these tantrums?—Here, Donaldson; walk your horse down to where Butters is, on

the far side of the ground, and tell him he must come up here to give the Dancing Master his gallop."

Butters really was a fine horseman, and, but for his weight, might have been riding races at this time. He was very soon upon the back of the grey, and, after two or three plunges, the horse seemed to recognise there was no possibility of getting rid of him. Once more was the order given to go, and Donaldson again leads the way; this time the Dancing Master slips off in easy fashion, and follows his leaders in sober decorous manner. Things went very well till they came to the six-furlong post, where, according to orders, Donaldson quickened his pace, and then, to Mr. Greyson's utter astonishment, the Dancing Master apparently couldn't hold his own. The trainer set spurs to his hack and galloped down as soon as the spin was over to know what was the meaning of this.

"Well, Joe," he exclaimed, as he arrived at the mile-post, "what was it?"

"Just this, sir," replied Butters; "the minute I called upon him to go a bit in earnest he sulked and shut up."

"He wasn't done at all?" inquired the trainer.

"Done!" replied the head lad. "Not a bit of it—he was pulling my arms off. He simply refused to go on. There's some of them have done racing when they have done pulling. Blest if this horse ain't a conundrum. I believe him to be a real flyer if it wasn't for his temper. I've backed him for the Two Thousand, and most devoutly wish I hadn't."

"Well, Joe, I think you may take 'em all home now. There's no more to be done this morning."

When Mr. Greyson, after handing his hack over to one of the stablemen, walked towards the house, he found hanging about the gate a dark-eyed looking lad, attired in a grey tweed stable-jacket, moleskin trousers fitting pretty tightly to the leg, with some half-dozen buttons at the bottom outside each ankle, a rather gaudy silk handkerchief twisted round his neck, and a tweed cap slouched over his brows.

"Well, my lad, what do you want?" inquired the trainer.

"Work," replied Gerald, curtly, as he touched his cap.

"Of what kind? And what makes you come to me?"

"I think I can ride," replied Gerald.

"Nobody ever comes to me who doesn't," rejoined Greyson, "and it's astonishing how I differ with them at the end of the week. Mark me, my lad, there's always room in a racing-stable for a boy who can ride; but I keep a trial horse. Do you know what that means?"

"Of course; one with which you test the capabilities of the other horses in your stable."

While they were speaking, the trainer led the way through the wicket, and, strolling leisurely across the grass-plot, they now arrived at the porch. At the sound of their voices a half-open lattice was pushed still further open, and Dollie's head peeped out. The speakers could not see her in consequence of the roof of the porch, at the entrance of which they stopped, nor she them, but she could overhear every word they uttered, and naturally recognised their voices. It is almost superfluous to say that Dollie was perfectly well aware of the morning on which her lover was to make his application for employment at the Riddleton stables. Indeed, she had already exchanged a few words with Gerald at the gate while her father was on the Moor.

"No; my trial horse is a test of my lads' riding. The Dancing Master (you'll understand his name when you've had a ride on him) is about the wickedest I ever had in training. Now, look here, boy: if you like to ride him a gallop to-morrow morning, and he don't put you down or run away with you, I'll give you a chance. Be here at six to-morrow morning, and in the mean time, if you go into the house, they will give you something to eat and a mug of ale."

Gerald winced a little at the trainer's last remark, but there was one who winced far more than he did, and that one was Dollie, who had not lost one word of the conversa-

tion. She could not repress a slight shiver as her lover's degradation was thus brought home to her, and she remembered that it was she who had counselled his taking this step. Many girls would have felt nervous and frightened at the idea of the ordeal he was to go through on the morrow, and Dollie knew perfectly well what giving that iron-grey colt a gallop meant, but it must be borne in mind that Dollie had been brought up amongst horses and horsemen. She knew Gerald could ride, and believed in his riding as only a girl does believe in her lover's ability to do anything. No; she might be a little anxious, but she had no fear for him on the morrow: it was the humiliation of to-day that wounded her so deeply, that her Gerald—Gerald Rockingham, of Cranley Chase—should be consigned to her father's kitchen to get "something to eat and a mug of ale"—and this was the first time he had crossed the threshold of her home! He who should have come there as an honoured guest was meeting with the reception of a mere stable-lad on trial! And then Dollie knit her pretty brows in dire perplexity, and wondered whether she had been right in advising the step!

As for Gerald, he cared little about it. He walked off to the kitchen, joked the maids, and devoured the food and drink set before him with a hearty appetite. One accomplishment stood him in good stead. It is not an uncommon one. People born in a county, although they may speak excellent English, can also, if they choose, speak the *patois* of their county. Gerald was one of these, and could speak the broadest Yorkshire when it pleased him. He had thoroughly made up his mind to go through with his new part. The idea of riding the Dancing Master did not at all discompose him. He had ridden some very awkward horses before now. The only thing was it would be an awful bore to be kicked off, and, though he flattered himself he could stick pretty close to anything, still, what had happened to many others might also happen to him, and then he supposed

——Well! Old Greyson wouldn't give him an engagement.

Six o'clock the next morning found Gerald seated under the tree that fronted the Grange, patiently waiting the arrival of the trainer. Already he had seen the sheeted string of thoroughbreds, and under the superintendence of Butters take their way to the Moor. A few minutes later, and William Greyson emerges from the house, and walks towards the gate, where one of the stable-helps is holding his hack for him.

"Ah! my lad, so you come to be tested, and see what you can do with about the wickedest I ever trained?"

"I'm good to try, sir," replied Gerald, quietly.

"I rather like that, my boy," said the trainer. "It's a good deal better than that confounded confidence of half these young whipper-snappers in my employment; though I'm bound to say," he continued, with a grin, "the Dancing Master has taken the conceit out of most of them. Now you can just follow me up to the Moor, and then I'll see what you can do."

Gerald trudged along by the trainer's side for about a mile, and by that time they were on the Riddleton training-ground.

Do you suppose Dollie Greyson was in her bed this March morning when her lover's riding was to be so severely tested? She was up and dressed quite as soon as her father. Now it so happened that the upper windows of the Grange commanded an excellent view of the gallops on the Moor. It was true it was a mile off, but that is easily within the range of a good race-glass. Three pairs of these were hanging, as she well knew, in her father's room, and no sooner had he left it than she rushed across, and, selecting what she considered the best pair, brought them back to her own room, opened the window, and prepared to be a spectator of the proceedings. She saw her father and Gerald arrive on the Moor, and then, after some little delay, she saw the

horse led down which, as soon as the sheets were removed, her practised eye recognised as the Dancing Master.

There was a little group gathered round him, and it was evident that a consultation of some sort was taking place.

"Now, my lad," said the trainer, "there's the horse, and mind all I've told you about him is true; so take care of yourself. Here, lend him a pair of spurs and whip, some of you."

"Thank you, Mr. Greyson," replied Gerald; "but you've told me this is an awkward one, and I'd rather not have any spurs, though I'll take a whip."

"Look here, young feller," said Butters, in a low tone; "if you can't ride above a bit, don't you try it. If you don't know how to fall don't you try it, for he'll put you down to a moral. You're a lovely weight if you know how to do it, and should come down light, but that colt, oh Lord! he chucks them off as quick as you shell peas."

Another moment, and Gerald is on the back of the grey. For a moment or two after his head is loosed the colt stands motionless, whilst Gerald pats him on the neck, and, not the least deceived by this apparent calm, grips the saddle firmly with his knees. Then the Dancing Master commences his usual vagaries. A savage lash out behind is followed by a couple of furious plunges, which Gerald sits like a centaur, and then the fierce fight between horse and man commences. A practised eye like Greyson's speedily detects that this new candidate for employment *can* ride, and what strikes the trainer even more than that is the temper and patience he is showing in the struggle. The Dancing Master has been kicking and plunging his wickedest now for some minutes, sulking at intervals only to break out again with more malevolence. At last Gerald takes up the whip and uses it in real earnest. It seems to madden the horse; he plunges worse than ever, and in response to every plunge the whip cracks relentlessly round his ribs. Having failed so far to

get rid of his rider by the usual method, he suddenly rears up and throws himself back, and comes down with Gerald's legs under him. There is a rush of the lookers-on to his assistance, as there is, of course, danger of the horse striking him in getting up. When they draw Gerald from under the horse he is insensible.

"Here—some of you!" cries the trainer promptly, "put him in a spare sheet, and carry him down to the Grange. As for you, you devil," he continued, shaking his fist at the grey colt, who stood trembling a little at the result of his fall, "I suppose we never shall teach you manners?"

As for Dollie, who has viewed the desperate struggle between horse and man, when she sees the colt go back she feels sick, and turns white to her very lips. Then she sees him dexterously jerked away the minute the horse, commencing to rise, takes its weight off his leg; and then she sees again that ominous sign which makes her heart stand still—to wit, that he does not get up.

"Oh, my God! he's killed," she murmurs; "and it is I who have killed him."

But Dollie was no helpless young woman in times of exigency; bravely swallowing down an hysterical sob or two, she dashes down stairs and despatches some one in pursuit of the nearest doctor; then, stifling a strong inclination to order her own room to be prepared for the sufferer, she gives orders that a more modest apartment shall be got ready for him, and then, with beating heart and ashen cheeks, runs down to the wicket-gate to await Gerald's arrival. The first sign of it is the appearance of her father at a canter.

"Send somebody off for the doctor at once, my girl; and get a room ready on the ground floor. The new lad has had an awkward fall."

"I have done all that. He is not killed, father, is he?" she added, the tears welling up in her eyes.

"Killed—no; but it's knocked the senses out of him,

Until the doctor comes we shall hardly know to what extent he's hurt ; but what's all this ?—your cheeks are as white as a sheet, and the tears in your eyes ! ”

“ Oh ! it's nothing, father ; but I—I—I saw the accident ; and it's rather upset me.”

A few minutes more and Gerald is carried through the wicket and laid quietly down on the grass-plat under the tree. It requires all Dollie's control to prevent her throwing herself on her knees by his side and covering his pale cheek with her kisses. She hardly dares trust herself to speak ; but, motioning to the house, says in a low voice :—

“ His room is ready.”

As they raise him again Gerald opens his eyes, and, in answer to an inquiry from the trainer, replies :—

“ No. I'm a good deal shook, still I don't think I'm broke anywhere ; but Mr. Greyson, you try your boys rather high.”

CHAPTER VII.

SAM PEARSON, SOLICITOR.

MR. SAM PEARSON resided in a very pleasant house, standing in prettily laid out grounds some little distance outside Micklegate Bar, in short, just before you came to “ The Mount.” Very handy, indeed, this to the Knavesmire, and Mr. Pearson always kept open house during York races. The big county is notorious for its astuteness in the matter of horse-flesh, but the solicitor enjoyed the reputation of being more than a match for any horsedealer within miles of the North-country capital, and was as shrewd a judge of both men and racing as any one in those parts. It was considered half the battle in a horse-case to have Sam Pearson on your side. His practice was peculiar though extensive, consisting in a great measure of ~~these~~ ^{these} last-named causes and also the

extrication of gentlemen from pecuniary difficulties. Mr. Pearson was, in short, a racing solicitor,—a man who, had you security, would find you the money to pay for a high-priced yearling or to settle at Tattersall's. People who find money after this fashion don't do it for nothing, and that Mr. Pearson should pluck a good many quilled feathers from his client for his own benefit was only in accordance with the regular order of things. Keen and sharp as he was in practice, the solicitor was, perhaps, all the more dangerous for a genial *bonhomie* that was apt to make his customers overlook the price they were paying for accommodation. His easy, sanguine manner communicated itself to them, and people who came reluctantly, but still with the grim knowledge that a certain sum must be raised at whatever sacrifice, were wont to walk out of his office impressed with the idea that borrowing money at forty per cent., washed down by a glass of wonderful old brown sherry, was rather a rollicking piece of business than otherwise.

Mr. Writson said no more than the truth when he told Gerald that he fancied there would be little to be done with Sam Pearson. Mr. Writson was a steady old family solicitor, and, though his *amour propre* forbade him to believe he was not a match for any man in his own profession, yet he had an uncomfortable consciousness that upon this occasion he was pitted against the sharpest practitioner in all the West Riding. As for York and the countryside generally, I think they would have exclaimed:

“What! old Writson against Sam Pearson? Why it's a guinea to a gooseberry on Sam!”

Mr. Pearson had his offices in Lendall Street; a handy situation, no distance from either the market or Coney Street, both places to which clients of his were pretty well bound to resort, and two or three days after his interview with Gerald Mr. Writson stepped into the outer office, and sent in his card by one of the clerks. That the two solicitors knew one another was a matter of course; they had met as

antagonists before the magistrates, and also in the Assize Courts, many a time. That Mr. Writson should be received as soon as possible was a matter of professional etiquette, and he was speedily shown into Mr. Pearson's private sanctuary.

"Delighted to see you, my dear Writson. Almost unnecessary to ask after your health, for I never saw you looking better. Sharp weather, sir. Sharp as a solicitor in good practice, a little overdone for the matter of that. Interferes terribly with the hunting. But what am I saying? As if that was a thing concerned you. Pray sit down, and let me know if there is anything I can do for you."

"Well, Mr. Pearson," said the elder attorney, whose formal and somewhat old-fashioned manner contrasted very much with the genial, off-hand carelessness of the other, "I have called to represent Mr. Gerald Rockingham, and look after his interests in the winding-up of his father's affairs."

"A profitless occupation," laughed Pearson. "You'll find, I'm afraid, there is very little picking to be got off those bones."

"You don't seem to follow me quite," retorted Writson, a little sharply. "I'm here to ascertain what it is possible to save out of the wreck for the widow and children."

"Tut, man! don't be so touchy. Salvage has always been one of the privileges of our craft. It is rather rough on the boy, I admit, to suddenly discover that his father has sucked the orange, and that he has merely inherited the skin; but it is so. Alister Rockingham lived all his life as if his purse was bottomless; and, mind, was not the man to brook either interference or advice. My instructions were generally a brief intimation that I must find so much money at very short notice; no need to tell you that that meant bills bearing pretty stiff interest, and then, of course, came the old story of renewing; after which, as we all know, it is a mere question of time. Poor Rockingham was so far favoured

that his fortune just saw him out; had he lived, nothing could have saved Cranley Chase from the hammer this year."

"Surely," exclaimed Writson, "you might have expostulated with him upon his reckless career?"

"Of course I might," replied Pearson, cheerfully; "and enjoyed the gratification of seeing some other of my brethren undertake what my very high principles had rendered me squeamish about. I have a wife and family," continued Pearson, with mock solemnity. "The extensive borrowing of money throws very pretty pickings in the way of the legal gentleman who has the management of it; and, in justice to my belongings, it was not for me to let another pick up gold and silver, for the pocketing of which I had been vouchsafed the first opportunity. No, no, Writson," added Pearson, laughing; "I'm pretty straight; but you can't expect me to take off my hat, and say, 'After you, sir,' when it comes to who is to be first on Tom Tiddler's ground."

"Well," rejoined the elder solicitor, "I most assuredly haven't come to talk over either sentiment or morality, sorry though I may be to see a good old county name struck off the roll; but I presume I can see all the deeds, mortgages, and otherwise; in short, all the records of these money-borrowing transactions?"

"Undoubtedly, undoubtedly," replied the other. "Now, suppose you come and take a bit of dinner with me. I'll give you a rare good bottle of claret, or port if you prefer it, and then we could run through all these papers over a cigar afterwards; what do you say?"

"I regret, Mr. Pearson, that I don't smoke! and that I've been brought up not to mix business matters with after-dinner enjoyments. If you will kindly let me know what day I can go over those papers with you here, I will call in again; and now I'll wish you good morning."

Sam Pearson gave vent to a low whistle as the door closed on his visitor.

"Well, of all the old broomsticks," he muttered, "that ever I came across! He's as stiff, as wooden, and with about as much in him as is comprised within that very commonplace implement."

Another knock at the door cut short the lawyer's meditations; and he was informed by one of his clerks that Mr. Elliston wanted to see him.

"Show him in," replied Pearson; and as his visitor entered he rose to shake hands with him.

"Sit down," he continued. "Is it racing or money-lending brings you here? The former, I hope; because there's a want of appreciation of your autograph that makes the latter occupation somewhat difficult."

"You needn't be afraid; I've not come to trouble you about anything of that sort. I only want to talk to you about the horses. We have got two good clinking four-year-olds in the stable in Caterham and Phaeton; and, as the latter beat the Two Thousand winner in the Leger last September, both the handicappers and the public are bound to conclude Phaeton the best horse of the two. Now we know he is just as many pounds behind Caterham as they will think him in front. It strikes me that our game would be to run Phaeton out at Ascot, and keep Caterham for the autumn handicaps."

"Yes," said Pearson, musingly, "those appear to be sound tactics. Phaeton is quite safe to pick up a race or two at Ascot, which will, of course, impress that credulous community known as the British public more than ever with his superiority to Caterham. Yes, there seems a possibility of doing a smartish amount of business that way; but we're cruel unlucky with the young ones; none of the two-year-olds seem any good, nor the threes either, unless it's that iron-grey colt——"

"And he has the temper of Satan," interposed Elliston, quickly. "Lord Glasgow was right. When you are cursed

with brutes of that description the best thing is to shoot 'em right off."

"Ycs," rejoined Pearson; "I don't suppose we shall do any good with him."

"Absurd to think otherwise. And now listen to what I've principally come to see you about. They have got a dark colt, called Pibroch, by the Piper, out of Maggie Lauder, down at Newmarket, which I hear has done something very big. I know there's a big commission out to back it by the stable for the Two Thousand; and I think, old man, we had better swim in the same boat."

"All right. I suppose you can place implicit reliance on your information? They are laying a goodish price against that colt at present, and therefore you had better attend to it as soon as you get back to town, or wire, if you're going to linger down here. Now I've a little bit of news for you. Gerald Rockingham is going to institute a rigorous inquiry into his late father's affairs."

"Well," replied Elliston, "I should think that that matters very little to you; it may be inconvenient to *me* if sundry unredeemed promissory notes should come to light—no need to tell you that I borrowed a good bit of money from Alistair in days gone by."

"Yes," rejoined Pearson, with a tinge of contempt in his tones, "I can easily imagine that; and yet you would not let me give him a hint about Phaeton for the Leger. If these bills exist they're not in my keeping, but will very likely be found amongst the late Squire's papers at the Chase."

"Well, if they come into the hands of that young cub he can't make any use of them. I conclude they are all long overdue?"

"No," rejoined Pearson, looking at his turf confederate through half-closed eyes; "I should think not; but if Gerald Rockingham chooses to publish the fact of their existence, and to hand them about now that it is generally

known he has been left pretty well penniless, I think it would be unpleasant for you in a social point of view."

Sam Pearson was pretty unscrupulous, and a very keen practitioner to boot, but even he stood aghast sometimes at the cynical cold-blooded selfishness of Cuthbert Elliston. From his boyhood Elliston had never left a desire ungratified that could be obtained at the expense of his fellows. What it might cost them was a matter of little moment to him. Of good family, he still held a brave front before the world, though there were items in his record which if brought to light were even more than the easy-going society of our times could condone. Ruthless he had been from his youth to either man or woman, sacrificing them all in turn to the mere gratification of the moment; but he was a good-looking man even yet, with a plausible manner and soft caressing address, apt to prepossess people in his favour; in reality false, heartless, and relentless as a panther, and well-nigh as dangerous when brought to bay. Whatever his shortcomings might be, there were three things which no one could accuse Cuthbert Elliston of lacking—nerve, determination, and bitterness of tongue; and yet no one who didn't know him would have guessed what savage sarcasm could fall from the lips of a man rather remarkable for his low *trainant* tones.

"There's something in what you say, Pearson," he remarked, as he lit a cigarette; "but you don't quite understand the game, you see. You're a devilish clever solicitor, and there's no better judge of racing in England, but you know about as much of London society as you do of Central Africa. Used, as you suggest, by Alister Rockingham, known all through the London world, and the story of these bills would have been, as you say, a very unpleasant fact to face; but in the hands of a boy like Gerald, known to nobody, the thing is very different. Bah! *that* for any harm he could do me," and Cuthbert Elliston snapped his fingers contemptuously.

Sam Pearson said no more; the subject did not concern him, nor was it one he particularly cared to discuss. There were times when the lawyer distrusted his confederate. He invariably kept a very strict eye upon him, and as William Greyson was devoted to him Pearson preconceived, and not unjustly, that Elliston, whatever he might do with other people, was at all events bound to deal fairly with him.

"You're quite right, Elliston," he replied, good-humouredly; "I don't pretend to any knowledge of the London world. I heard from Greyson yesterday morning, and he says the horses are all doing well, and coming on nicely. It's no use our going over to Riddleton yet, but you must come down and put up with me a little later on, and we'll go over there and have a regular talk with Greyson about the forthcoming campaign. He will know still more about the nags than he does now. I suppose you go back to town pretty soon?"

"Off by the afternoon train, and, as I want to get something to eat before I start, I shall wish you good-bye. Drop me a line when you want me. As you say, visiting a training-ground at this time of year is d——d cold and unprofitable. Good-bye!" And so saying Mr. Elliston strolled leisurely out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE REVEREND ROBERT THORNDYKE.

Two months have elapsed since Alister Rockingham's death, and his widow and daughter are established in a small house just outside the Minster Close. They have not as yet made any fresh acquaintances, but the Rockinghams of Cranley Chase are well known to all the principal Church dignitaries in York, and none of them have failed to leave

cards on them. Alister Rockingham had been a very popular man—"a right good fellow, no one's enemy but his own," was the universal verdict, and sincere commiseration for Mrs. Rockingham and her children was the general feeling all through the city and the countryside. What had become of Gerald no one exactly knew. He had disappeared immediately after establishing his mother and sister in their present modest abode; and all they knew about him was that he was in Cambridgeshire, where he said he had got work to do which would enable him to get a living, though it was naturally quite unconnected with the University. Poor Mrs. Rockingham troubled herself very little about what this occupation might be. But with Ellen it was different, and she felt very inquisitive as to what it was her brother was doing; but his father's death had made a great difference in Gerald; he had passed from boyhood to manhood at one bound; and to all inquiries from his sister made short answer, adding that she might deem his present employment derogatory to a Rockingham, but that Rockinghams must live, and that he found it impossible to do so on the family dignity. Miss Rockingham was not a little astonished; she recognised quite as quickly as her mother did the change in Gerald's character. As his eldest sister, she had been accustomed to patronise and sometimes snub him; she understood now that this phase of sisterly subjugation was passed. Our relatives are a little slow to do this, and are wont to overlook the fact that we are no longer children.

"It's a come-down, mother, after Cranley Chase; still, the little house is clean and comfortable, and I shouldn't so much mind if it wasn't for the terrible want of earnestness of purpose manifest amongst all these cathedral dignitaries. They seem to think choral services and brilliant sermons is the limit of their calling. I miss my work at Cranley dreadfully—I feel myself so utterly useless here."

"I am sure you need not fret, dear Ellen, about that. There are plenty of parish priests in York who are quite

outside the Minster circle; in a big city like this you may depend on it any of these will find you plenty of such employment as you wish for without difficulty."

"Yes: I heard yesterday that the Rector of St. Margaret's was a real hard-working parish priest. I think, mother, I should like to make his acquaintance."

"Surely there will be time enough, child, for that later on. We are still within the shadow of our great loss."

"True, dearest mother," cried the girl, rising, and caressing her as she spoke, "but grief becomes no easier to bear to people of my age and temperament by sitting still with our hands in our lap. I want *work*," continued Ellen, almost passionately—"something to take me out of myself. I have been accustomed to a good deal of it, you know, during the last two or three years, and this enforced idleness maddens me. Pray don't think that I have forgotten our trouble any more than yourself; but we do not all meet our sorrows in similar fashion."

Mrs. Rockingham stared at her daughter in no little astonishment. Ellen was a singularly undemonstrative young woman, sparing of her caresses, and reticent of any display of emotion; one of those self-contained natures that when they are really moved, are wont to astonish those nearest and dearest to them. Whether in love, anger, or righteous indignation, the habitual restraints once broken down they rage like a tornado; and the intensity of their emotions, once exhausted, seemed to collapse with a sob and a shiver, after the manner of such fierce and fitful storms. Ellen Rockingham had, so to speak, been for the last three years beating against the bars. A quick, clever, intellectual girl, the dull country society to which she had been condemned wearied her to death; for, since she had come out, the Squire's reduced means had not admitted of indulgence in a London season for his wife and daughter. A few weeks for himself *en garçon*, about Epsom and Ascot times, had been all he could afford; while the ladies were left to vege-

tate in Cranley Chase. Now and again she met at some of the great houses in the neighbourhood a few brilliant talkers from that great world which it seemed she was never destined to enter; and so at last, to relieve the intolerable dullness, Ellen Rockingham chose to consider herself endowed with a mission—namely, that of the regeneration of the rustic population of Cranley. Well, she took it out of herself a good deal in this way, and that, with the assistance of long solitary gallops on the back of her favourite mare, had constituted her life for the last two or three years. She got on badly with girls of her own age; questions of paramount importance in their minds had no interest for her. Dress! No one could ever say but what Miss Rockingham was well dressed; but still it was due to no exertion on her part. She had a good figure, a mother with exquisite taste, and a very clever maid; under which circumstances a young lady may be faultless in costume without paying much attention to it herself. Indeed, I have heard it whispered more than once that there are great ladies whose appearance would be benefited considerably if they would only leave such matters to their maid and dressmaker.

To say that the choral service of the Minster was anything new to Miss Rockingham would, of course, be absurd; she had attended service there often, and had arrived at the conclusion about the clergy connected with the Cathedral upon no grounds whatever. They might be, what she imagined them, drawing good salaries, addicted to good dinners, and thinking they were thoroughly discharging the duties of their station by seeing that the music part of the services was as good as possible; but Miss Rockingham was not in the least behind the scenes, and these men might possibly be quite as much given to “good works” as Miss Rockingham herself, and perhaps a little more judicious in the manner of them. Ellen had fallen unfortunately under the austere influence of the Low Church Rector of Cranley, an excellent well-meaning man in the pulpit, what Baxter describes as a “pious

and painful preacher"; but a man who unfortunately deemed any show of geniality of disposition not in accordance with his profession. The Cranley people, I fancy, infinitely preferred his predecessor, who troubled himself more about the hounds and "Scott's Derby lot" than the schools; who didn't preach, but simply read two short drowsy sermons on Sunday; yet was ever open-handed and sympathetic with his parishioners in their trouble.

Miss Rockingham, thrown by compulsion a good deal on her own thoughts, found herself perpetually musing over what this Rector of St. Margaret's might be like. He was a man much talked about in York just then. He had somewhat scandalised the dons of the Cathedral by what they were pleased to term his utter want of dignity and sense of his position. These rather High Churchmen were a little aghast at his democratic tendencies. They talked patronisingly to the poorer members of their flocks: the Reverend Robert Thorndyke would shake hands with his shoemaker, and treat him perfectly as an equal. At the same time there could be no doubt that he was a most energetic, hardworking man in his parish; in fact, as far as Miss Rockingham could hear, he was perfectly irrepressible, always bubbling over with energy, and throwing himself into whatever he took up with a vehemence that usually swept all before it. There was a want of reverence too for the ecclesiastical authorities that some of the ladies of York especially shook their heads over. He had been known to contradict the Dean, and even to argue with the Archbishop. A desperate, contumacious man this, with a strong will and opinions of his own, and who, moreover, by no manner of means could be made to understand that it would be more proper to subdue these opinions in the presence of his superiors. There again was a case of the man's moral obliquity! He couldn't be made to understand that he *had* any superiors. The more Miss Rockingham heard of the Reverend Robert Thorndyke the more curious she became to see him. She pictured him to

herself as a somewhat ascetic, Low Church, puritanical clergyman, ablaze with all the fire and enthusiasm of a John Knox, one who railed at all High Church doctrines; stern in his denunciation of anything which savoured of Roman Catholicism as the great Scotch reformer. And one Sunday afternoon Miss Rockingham put on her bonnet, and informed her mother that she was about to attend service at St. Margaret's. She arrived there in good time, thereby obtaining a good seat almost facing the pulpit. A few minutes, and the Rector entered the reading-desk, and Miss Rockingham opened her eyes wide. No one could say that the Reverend Robert Thorndyke was in the least deficient in dignity in the pulpit, whatever he might be elsewhere. But then he was so utterly unlike what Miss Rockingham had imagined. Instead of the pale, ascetic divine she had pictured to herself, the clergyman who commenced to read the service was a man of about four or five and thirty years of age, standing at least six feet one in his boots, with crisp brown curly hair, bright blue eyes, which, though now composed, one could see at a glance had a laugh in them, and a somewhat florid complexion. Another moment, and his voice rang through the building—clear, sonorous, and musical; and when the prayers were over Miss Rockingham thought she had never heard them more impressively read, and then she composed herself for the five-and-forty minutes' serious discourse which she felt sure was to follow. But here Miss Rockingham was destined to be still further astonished. In a quarter of an hour Mr. Thorndyke had said his say, and had preached a sermon breathing hope and charity, which presented a rather startling contrast to that weary catalogue of pains and penalties to which she had been accustomed to listen in Cranley church. The sharp, nervous, incisive sentences made a great impression on Miss Rockingham. What this man had to say he had said in such a clear distinct fashion that a child might almost have followed him; whereas the clergyman at whose feet she had till lately

sat was wont to be not only involved and wandering in his discourse, but to dwell with unctuous emphasis on all the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian Creed.

As Miss Rockingham walked home I'm afraid she was thinking rather more of the preacher than of the service at which she had assisted. A clever girl herself, she recognised that that short and apparently simple sermon was the work of a clever man, and came to the conclusion that for the future she would attend church at St. Margaret's. This was comforting to her, for to get their doctrine to their minds is sometimes a great tribulation to young ladies.

"Well, Ellen," said Mrs. Rockingham, as her daughter entered the drawing-room, "were you pleased with the service at St. Margaret's?"

"Very much, mother; but anything more unlike what I fancied him than the Reverend Robert Thorndyke is, it is impossible to conceive. He wears a moustache, and looks more like a dragoon than a clergyman, but he reads the service beautifully and preached such a clever sermon."

CHAPTER IX.

SIR MARMADUKE MARTINDALE.

It was about this time that there suddenly rose above the turf horizon that bright particular star Sir Marmaduke Martindale, and with the advent of Sir Marmaduke came what is generally known as the era of the "plungers." At twenty-one the young baronet found himself in possession of twenty thousand a year and one hundred thousand pounds ready money, the accumulations of a somewhat long minority. During his Cambridge career Sir Marmaduke had shown much more taste for the computation of the odds than the absorbing study of conic sections. He preferred the lore of

Newmarket to the teaching of the schools, and no sooner was he his own master than he promptly repudiated a University which, truth to tell, had been more than once on the verge of repudiating him. Sir Marmaduke had never affected the slightest intention of taking a degree, but there are plenty of men who go up to Oxford and Cambridge without any design of that nature. The baronet's irregularities had been pretty notorious, and that he should have escaped the pains and penalties of his offending was due partly to luck and partly to the leniency of the authorities. The Dons of his college don't trouble their heads very much about a man of this sort as far as his reading is concerned; providing he is subordinate to the discipline of the University, and does not wax over-riotous, they ask no more of him. Never having expected him to be a credit to his college, they are content to rest satisfied as long as he avoids the other extreme, and does not become a disgrace to it.

In no man's blood did the fierce itch of gambling run hotter than Sir Marmaduke's. He had exhibited this wild passion for play while at the University, and had even then contrived to have a few horses in training at Newmarket; but, once emancipated from all restraint, Sir Marmaduke embarked in racing on a colossal scale. He gathered together a lengthy string of thoroughbreds, and the boldest of bettors stared aghast at the magnitude of his speculations. He became the head of a small clique who played almost as boldly as himself. Betting in those days was carried on on a scale of which the young men of the present day have no conception, and sums of such magnitude could be won over the great races as is now no longer possible. Amongst other equine celebrities owned by Sir Marmaduke was this colt Pibroch, of which Cuthbert Elliston had spoken to Pearson. The horse had only run once as a two-year-old, when he had won a small stake at Newmarket, defeating some four or five very moderate opponents. From his performances he had not the slightest right to be first favourite

for the Two Thousand Guineas, but first favourite he was, and, what is more, one of the hottest favourites that had been seen for many years. That the stable knew a good deal more about him than the public it was only fair to conjecture, and when Sir Marmaduke and his friends really fancied a horse the sheer weight of money that they invested upon him invariably brought him to the top of the poll. Both backers and bookmakers are exceedingly like sheep, and invariably follow the lead of two or three guiding spirits.

Sir Marmaduke was a man who already in his short career had made some marvellous *coups* on the turf; and that ravening section of the British public who indulge in such speculation were now keenly observant of everything he did, and excessively anxious to share his fortunes, consequently the public now were wildly backing Pibroch for the Guineas, although of course upon much less favourable terms than his owner and friends had contrived to do;—though it wanted yet about a month of the day fixed for the race, seven to four was the latest quotation against Sir Marmaduke's colt.

Mr. Cuthbert Elliston had been early in the field, and had contrived to appropriate a considerable proportion of money at the same price as the stable for himself and Pearson. Elliston was a man who had quite a staff of horse-watchers and people of that kind in his employ, and undoubtedly often was in early possession of valuable information concerning stables other than his own. He paid well for such, and never inquired by what means it had been come by, but on one point he was relentless. If ever the information supplied by one of his myrmidons turned out false Cuthbert Elliston left no stone unturned to punish the offender. More than one of these jackals of the racecourse had rued the day when, either from design or carelessness, they had despatched false intelligence to Cuthbert Elliston.

Sam Pearson, as he read the weekly account of the doings at Tattersall's, felt well satisfied with what his partner had done about Pibroch. You may know nothing about racing,

but to buy shares at a low price and find them going up forty or fifty per cent. is a thing understood by most people, and that is precisely what the quotations from Tattersall's represented to Pearson.

Ah, well ! it is all over now ; and horse-racing, according to many people who study the signs of the times, is in a fair way to share the fate of pugilism. The days lang sync, when investors used to enjoy all the fun of watching the fancy they had backed fluctuate in the turf share-market all through the winter, are gone. We live in days of cant and mock civilisation, and are perfectly hysterical in our shrieks regarding cruelty to animals. We sacrifice our fellow-creatures without the slightest compunction in the numberless petty wars in which we are everlastingly engaged, and yet shrink from putting the rope round the murderer's neck. Civilised, no doubt,—ever advancing in civilisation ! But what is the outcome of it all ?

Sir Marmaduke had opened the season in rare form. The Ring had winced at the settling over the Craven Meeting, and were now perfectly paralysed by another stroke of turf strategy on the part of this young Napoleon of the race-course. A dangerous three-year-old had made his appearance at this last meeting, and landed a Biennial Stake over the Rowley Mile in such handsome fashion as to suggest to the minds of the lookers-on that he was likely to imperil the victory of Pibroch in the Two Thousand, however good that colt might be. Before the ensuing week was over it became known through turf circles that Sir Marmaduke had bought this new comer for a fabulous sum, and after that, as the bookmakers said, who could say what this daring young gambler might do ? That he had a wonderful clear, shrewd head, those who came most in contact with him were fain to acknowledge ; that he was a very fair judge of racing was also apparent ; while even his veteran trainer was often filled with astonishment at the information he possessed about antagonistic stables. Sir Marmaduke, indeed, em-

ployed a very army of horse-watchers. He eclipsed Cuthbert Elliston in this respect, and, though he might lack that gentleman's experience, he possessed a very much longer purse. Informers against horses, like informers against humanity, are ever at the disposal of the highest bidders.

It was curious to see the effect of Sir Marmaduke's appearance in the Ring, when, with his hat slightly pushed back, flower in button-hole, and cigarette in mouth, he stepped inside the roaring circle, and opened that betting-book, bound in the colours they knew so well. The book-makers swarmed round him like bees round a honeycomb; and the quick, short nods with which, the price once adjusted, he would pencil down three or four pages of bets, was a sight to see. Men don't back horses in such fashion nowadays, and perhaps it is as well; but I never can help a lingering feeling of admiration for those bold bettors of the "plunging era."

I suppose in the old days of the Prince Regent and Crockford's, when Charles Fox played hazard from sunset to sunrise, they perhaps gambled as fiercely; but I doubt if men of the present time can ever recall heavier gambling on the turf than when Sir Marmaduke Martindale was at the zenith of his career. There were all sorts of rumours concerning him. 'Twas said that he slept with his betting-book and a Derringer pistol under his pillow; that he lived chiefly upon champagne and cigarettes. The rumours of his winnings were fabulous; of his losings people never spoke; and yet the most reliable axiom connected with gambling is contained in the line, "But dice will run the contrary way."

It was some three weeks before the First Spring Meeting at Newmarket, and Tattersall's was in a tremendous blast that Monday. Hotter and hotter was the desire to invest upon Pibroch; but, boldly as the backers came to the front, still the fielders never flinched. No sooner was six to four taken in hundreds than the strident voice of Bob Broughton

—one of the leading Northern bookmakers—rang through the room with—

“Herc’s anaither seven hoondred to four against Pibroch.”

Seated on one of the benches outside the little Subscription Room, with the eternal cigarette in his mouth, was the owner of that noble animal. His hat was tipped over his eyes on this occasion, and not thrown slightly back on his head, as was the case when he meant really transacting business; he seemed half asleep, and was only roused from his reverie by a good-looking man, who lounged up to him and said,—

“I say, Marm, they’re knocking your horse about like the deuce inside. What’s the matter?—is there anything wrong with him?”

“There wasn’t at nine o’clock this morning. He did a good gallop, and pulled up fresh and well; and I should have been wired to in cipher had anything happened.”

“All right, old man; blest if I don’t have another seven hundred to four about him at once. Broughton and some more of them there have got a craze that they know something.”

“Well,” said Sir Marmaduke, in his usual languid manner, “I think I wouldn’t be in a hurry, if I were you.”

“Why? you tell me the horse is all right; what the deuce do you mean?” exclaimed Captain Farrington.

“Well, as a rule, I usually mean what I say. I simply reiterate, the horse is well; but, if you take my advice, you won’t be in a hurry to back him.”

“But hang it all, old fellow; just explain.”

“My dear Farrington, if there’s one thing I pride myself upon it is the extreme simplicity of my English. I never go into verbose explanations. Do as you like, but don’t turn round upon me afterwards and say I might have told you. Turf tactics are beautiful in their simplicity and ingenuity; but you can’t win if you lay your cards upon the table.”

Captain Farrington gave vent to a subdued whistle. He was a bold and daring plunger, and had concentrated such brains as Providence had given him on the study of the mysteries of the turf. He knew better than to attempt bookmaking, being conscious that arithmetic was one of his weak points; but in the backing of horses, like the backing of the colours in *rouge et noir*, there is a delightful simplicity requiring but little intellect to master. He did not do so very badly upon the whole. He was a popular man, and received various hints from the racing magnates as to judicious investments; although, as in the present case, it took a little hammering into his handsome head.

"Doosid clever fellow is Marmy. Suppose I'd better wait and see what his little game is."

He hadn't very long to wait. As the clock in the Subscription Room marked a quarter to five Martindale lounged in in his usual *nonchalant* manner. "Want to back a horse, Sir Marmaduke?" was shouted from more than one throat, but above the din thundered Broughton's voice with:—

"Here's seven fifties to four Pibroch!"

"Have a bet, Sir Marmaduke," said one of the wiliest speculators in the turf market. "I've only just begun a book on the Guineas, and you haven't given me a turn yet. Let me write you down."

"So you shall," rejoined the baronet, "if you really mean betting."

"All right, Sir Marmaduke, what shall it be? In monkeys or thousands?"

"I'll tell you what you shall do," said the baronet, drawing his betting-book from his pocket, "you shall lay me ten thousand to a thousand against Bushranger, and if anybody wants to go on"—and here the baronet looked defiantly at the surrounding crowd of bookmakers—"they can lay it again!"

It was something like a shell exploding in that circle. Here was the owner of the favourite backing his new pur-

chase instead of standing to his old love. There was a slight hesitation, and then from various quarters rang out offers to take the odds against Bushranger, with the natural consequence that his stable-companion, Pibroch, began to decline in the betting. As for Sir Marmaduke, he was inflexible. He offered to take ten to one not only again but twice over, but the Ring had got a scare, and eight to one was the highest offer. Muttering something contemptuously to the effect that he really had no time to waste with a lot of men who didn't mean betting in earnest, but were simply all talk, the baronet snapped up his book and left the Subscription Room. As he made his way up the narrow passage to the outer door he was overtaken by Farrington.

"By Jove, old fellow!" said that gentleman, "you've set 'em a riddle inside that will keep 'em thinking all night. But I say, Marm, is Bushranger really the best?"

"My dear Farrington, don't ask indiscreet questions. Rest satisfied with what I told you at the beginning of the afternoon—namely, that if you waited you'd get longer odds about Pibroch."

The captain remained wrapped in reverie for some few minutes after the baronet left. At last his thoughts took a tangible form, and he muttered, "It's a rum go, and which is the real pea I'm blest if I know!"

CHAPTER X.

AN UNDERGRADUATE OF THE SADDLE.

GERALD ROCKINGHAM, under the assumed name of Jim Forrest, had now been installed for some three weeks at Riddleton Grange. He stuck closely to his work, was excessively willing and punctual, though deviation in this last matter is a thing rarely known in a racing-stable. He had won Joe Butters's regard, not only for these former qualities

but from his perfect nerve with the horses. Jim Forrest, indeed, seemed quite indifferent as to what he rode, and was now appointed to look after the Dancing Master. He got on pretty fairly with that amiable animal in his box, and could admittedly do more with the horse on the training-ground than any one else. I don't at all mean that he had exorcised the devil entirely out of the brute. The horse still continued to show his savage temper as heretofore; he would suddenly decline to move at all, then he would buck, kick, and plunge like a very demon. Then again he would take hold of his bit, and for once in a way gallop with a vengeance, cutting down both Caterham and Phaeton at seven pound less than weight-for-age in marvellous fashion, making old Bill Greyson grind his teeth with exasperation when he thought of the brute's waywardness.

"There's all the stakes in the world at the villain's mercy if we could only rely upon him. What a thing temper is, both amongst horses and Christians!"

One thing the astute trainer noticed was that the Dancing Master had never succeeded in getting rid of young Forrest. He had thrown every boy in the stable, not even excepting the redoubtable Joe Butters; but Jim Forrest, thanks to his firm seat and untiring vigilance, had never been so disposed of, unless the first morning, when the horse went back with him, should be so accounted. Not a pleasant horse to ride by any manner of means. He would go along quietly and easily just to lull you to sleep, and then, without a word of warning, break out in his tantrums, the result of which was that many a boy turned a somersault in the air. Jim owed his immunity to never relaxing his vigilance. After that first morning he had never asked for the favour of a whip, and Bill Greyson had often admired the patience with which the lad would bear with the horse's vagaries. He would sometimes wear the Dancing Master out when he was in one of his sullen moods by sitting immovable as one of the sentries at the Horse Guards, and quietly waiting till it

pleased him to move, when at last the horse, I presume from sheer weariness of spirit, would break into life again, and either kick or plunge, or start down the gallop like a steed possessed.

"Tell you what, Dollie, that was rather a good pick-up, that last boy—that young Forrest. He's only been with us three weeks or so and I'm blest if he isn't the best of the lot of them. Mark me, if he don't put on flesh, and become too heavy, he'll likely come out as a jockey some of these days," said Mr. Greyson one morning.

That Dollie watched her lover's progress with the keenest interest I need scarcely say; but she very rarely succeeded in exchanging a word with him. It would have been a terrible solcism for Miss Greyson to have been seen talking to one of the stable-boys. Should Jim Forrest ever become a jockey, then, of course, it would be perfectly correct, as, by the immutable law of nature, jockeys seem invariably to look amongst the trainers' daughters for a wife. Although Jim bore his lot with great resolution, it had more discomfort than usual connected with it. It need scarcely be said that association with his companions was extremely distasteful to him, and that they should bitterly resent his standing rather aloof from them was only natural. They speedily recognised that he was of a class above themselves, and liked him no better for that, stigmatising him as a "bloated swell," and subjecting him occasionally not only to their coarse jeers, but further electing him as a fit subject to play practical jokes upon. However, all this sort of thing came very speedily to an end. One of the biggest boys, encouraged by the placid manner with which Forrest tolerated this sort of horseplay, thought fit to indulge his humour rather further one evening. He caught a Tartar with a vengeance. Jim's left shot out straight and deadly as a matador's sword, and stretched the joker flat upon his back. "A ring—a ring!" shouted his companions; and, with little stomach for the task, the aggressor found himself obliged to stand up to his

victim and fight him in earnest. Bob Matthews—for such was the aggressor's name—would have very gladly compromised matters; but his comrades had no idea of being defrauded of all the gratifications of a fight. Jim was about a year older than his antagonist, and, besides a natural aptitude for all athletic pursuits, had enjoyed the advantage of professional instruction. Three rounds saw the termination of the whole affair; and that Bob Matthews should have come up for the third time after the severe punishment he had received showed that, though destitute of science, he was at all events not wanting in pluck.

I need scarcely say that, from this out, no one attempted to interfere with Jim. The stable-boys had ascertained two very important points—not only that he would fight, but also that he could—in fact, the straightness, quickness, and severity of his hitting had excited no small admiration in the little community.

If the life was somewhat hard it was at all events healthy. Early hours, lots of exercise on the bracing moorland, and plenty of wholesome food; for, though jockeys are perforce condemned to lead the lives of anchorites, the boys in any stables of repute are well taken care of, and by no means “muzzled.” Still it was galling to one who had been brought up as heir to Cranley Chase to have to endure at times sharp rating from a man who had stood almost in the capacity of servant to his father; and, willing as Jim was, the strapping down of his horse was new to him. He was not ignorant of how it ought to be done, but he lacked the practical knowledge. As Mr. Greyson said emphatically to him one morning, “You’re better in the saddle than the stable, my lad. Don’t be afraid of your horse; rub him down as if you were polishing a dining-table.”

“He’s a little awkward to deal with, sir,” expostulated Jim.

“We never want answers unless asked for in a racing stable,” replied Greyson, sharply. “Your business, my lad, is

to take in what's said to you, and offer no opinion upon it. If I take it into my head to train tigers, you'll have to do 'em properly, or go."

Trainers have their annoyances like other people. Annoyances as a rule are reflected in the temper like a face in a glass, and Mr. Greyson at times would almost shake his fist and curse the Dancing Master after some out-of-the-way misconduct on that provoking animal's part. It was aggravating after such a slice of luck as carrying off the Two Thousand and Leger the previous year to find yourself with a colt in the stable quite capable of a similar feat if he could only be induced to do his best. But there it was. A queerer-tempered animal than the Dancing Master it had never been Bill Greyson's lot to take charge of. His legs seemed of iron. He was never sick nor sorry, nor any anxiety to his trainer in that way; but what vagaries that wayward grey might indulge in on a racecourse no mortal could foresee. His owner, Cuthbert Elliston, felt more vindictive concerning him than even Greyson. His wrath with an animal that ought to be a veritable gold-mine to him, and obstinately declined to exert itself, was virulent in the extreme; and over and over again he declared that it was cheaper to shoot such bad-tempered brutes at once. You could not then be seduced by fallacious performances on the home gallops into losing your money over them on a racecourse, and the Dancing Master, during his two-year-old career, had proved a terribly expensive horse from his erratic caprices.

Gradually Jim got excessively fond of his charge, and the wayward grey seemed after his own fashion to reciprocate his attendant's regard. It was undoubted that he would behave better to Jim than to any other boy in the stable, but that was not saying so very much after all. It was never safe to be at all careless in dealing with him, and on the training-ground his behaviour was, as often as not, quite as unruly as ever. Still, Jim, after the manner of the class

with which he had identified himself, believed that his charge was the greatest three-year-old in England.

"If you could only make up your mind to take things in reason, old man," he would say sometimes, as he caressed the grey's black muzzle, when that fickle quadruped was in an amiable mood, "you could take a double-first, you know you could. I know it's only your lightheartedness, but you carry it too far, you do indeed; and spoiling my waistcoat or fetching me one on the legs isn't a nice way of showing your gratitude."

Hazlitt has said "that the apprentice who does not believe that he will come to be Lord Mayor is in a fair way to be hanged." Similarly the stable-lad who does not think that the colt he looks after is a very possible Derby winner will do no good in his vocation. Jim stuck doggedly to his work, and never made answer again to any rebuke which Greyson addressed to him, rising gradually higher in that astute worthy's esteem than he could have imagined.

Another thing that had much perturbed Jim in the first few weeks of his novitiate was the fear of being [recognised, but this gradually faded away, as he found how very few of his own class were ever to be seen about Riddleton Moor. True, he knew that some time or other he should probably have to encounter Cuthbert Elliston or Pearson, but, as Dollie pointed out, the difference of dress and their being so utterly unprepared to see him in such a position would make their noticing him improbable. If he would simply wear a wrap round his throat that he could pull well up if necessary, a very common article of attire among his companions, and take the precaution of pulling his cap well over his brows when such partial concealment of his face became necessary, there was little fear of his being recognised.

"Don't be offended, Gerald dear, but our patrons don't take much notice of the stable-lads, as a rule," said Miss Greyson; "and you may trust me to let you know when we may expect visitors."

At eighteen, when we have done nothing, we are wont to think the eyes of the world are upon us. At eight-and-thirty, when we have shot our bolt, we know it is very unlikely to take heed of us. Jim Forrest, meanwhile, stuck stubbornly to the rough and somewhat monotonous existence he had marked out for himself. Wicked as the Dancing Master's temper was, Jim spent hours meditating over conciliatory measures concerning him, but the capricious brute, after exhibiting exemplary manners for two mornings running, and flattering his trainer into the belief that they had at last won his confidence, would on the third behave like a horse possessed; and even patient Bill Greyson, though firmly impressed as ever with what the grey could do if he chose, was getting more despondent every day about his ever being in the humour to try when wanted.

"It's hard, Dollic, confounded hard," he would say sometimes in the bitterness of his heart; "that grey colt trains on every day; no cause for uneasiness about him. He's sound in limb and wind as any I ever handled, and clears out his manger as a horse should do. That Forrest, who looks after him, is a smart lad, too. The brute's had every chance, and there the ungrateful devil stands. He's good enough to sweep the board this year, and bad enough to break the Bank of England."

"What does Mr. Elliston say about him, father?" asked the girl.

"Hates the very name of him. You see we had a rattling good year all round last, bar the Dancing Master. He took the gilt off the gingerbread considerable. What we dropped over him on the New Stakes at Ascot made a considerable hole in the Two Thousand winnings, while half the Phaeton money was down on him for the Middle Park, when he started first favourite and never even got placed."

"I'm sorry, father. It's very provoking. Will he gallop with what's-his-name—I mean Forrest—on his back?"

"Sometimes. But it's the old story; he will and he won't—and there's no guessing when he will."

"Shall you send him to Newmarket to follow in Caterham's footsteps, father?"

"Most unlikely he would follow even if sent," snapped Mr. Greyson; "but Mr. Elliston must decide that, and I don't think he'll trust him again. I should think one hundred and fifty or so would buy him; and to any one who wants a superannuated groom comfortably chewed up, or a loose box kicked down, he's cheap at the money."

"He's not dangerous to the boy who looks after him, surely," said Dollie, quickly.

"No; not exactly. Forrest understands him, and he's fairly behaved with him in the stable; but he'd eat anybody who hadn't sense and quickness, and he kicks at times like a mad horse."

"And will win the Two Thousand?" interposed the girl, laughing.

"More likely never to have left Riddleton the day that race is run," replied her father. "However, Mr. Elliston is coming next week, and that will settle it."

"Yes, I suppose he will decide then," replied the girl, dreamily. "Good night."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ELLISTONS AT HOME.

IF ever a woman had tasted bitter experience that woman was Mrs. Cuthbert Elliston. A girl of excellent family, and with thirty thousand pounds dowry, she had yielded to the soft, seductive wooing of Captain Elliston, of "the Brigade," with half-a-score better men in point of position at her feet. Handsome man he was now, and with those soft, *trainant*

tones especially prized by women, as a rule; but twenty years ago young Elliston was voted about the best-looking and fastest young one in the Guards. His kith and kin were all of undeniable blood, and Elliston from the first had enjoyed the *entrée* to circles somewhat difficult of attainment. He became the fashion; the quick, genial *repartie* of those days could scarcely be traced in the cynical sarcasm of the present. Bright eyes sparkled and rosy lips smiled as Captain Elliston drew near, and, if some of his comrades thought "Cuddie" had done rather well for himself, there were plenty of young ladies who half envied Mary Merlington, niece to Lord Mavis, her good fortune.

She was marrying—only, poor soul! she didn't know it—a selfish gambler, already over head and ears in debt. A man at whom the Ring already began to look askance, and whose face was well known wherever dice rattled or eards were cut. But he was still popular with his brother officers, with whom such venial offences as a taste for play and habits of extravagance were of small account, and they all agreed Cuddie was making a very edifying end of it in marrying Miss Merlington; more especially when it transpired that only twenty thousand were settled on herself, and the remainder left loose to assist Elliston in the purchase of his steps.

"Just about put Cuddie square," observed Tom Rustleton, his most intimate friend, with a knowing wink; "give Mavis a real chance of playing the old comedy uncle, and coming down with the money for the steps afterwards."

"He ain't one of those bogus lords, all coronet and blue blood, old family, and chronic impecuniosity, is he?" inquired Colonel Matchlock.

"No, no; he spun, or struck oil, or made boots, or invented a patent, or else his father did. He was nearly d——d and knighted, but they made him a Baron instead. There's not much difference nowadays when Sir Richard serves you with two pounds of figs, or appeals to you to try his interchange-

able watch, or when, as a Baron, you get your living out of companies as bogus as your coronet."

"They get a little too bogus at times; but the law is benevolent to coronets, if possible, as a rule," rejoined Colonel Matchlock, a keen, cynical man of the world, with as much liking for Elliston as it was possible for him to achieve concerning any human being.

He was Elliston's Captain (we all know the extra rank carried by the Guards), and a man somewhat of his own kidney, but with far larger means and much cooler brains than his sub. for either racecourse or gaming-table. Colonel Matchlock would play high at whist or *écarté*, in both of which games he was a proficient; but he was not much given to hazard, nor was he given to betting high upon a racecourse, except under direct stable information;—no more irrepressible or daring plunger when that was the case than Dick Matchlock.

So they talked about Cuddie Elliston in the bow-window in Pall Mall some twenty years ago; and your brother officers, according to their different lights, are not wont to make such a very bad horoscope of your future, or judge of your character much amiss. Men and women, too, must internally judge their fellows from their own point of view. What represents almost vice to one person is simply folly to another. We differ in our creeds, we differ in our views of life, manners, and politics. The unmitigated cad in A.'s light is excellent company to B., while theologically I would advise my compeers who desire comfort especially to be "shadowy."

But marriage made no difference in Elliston's life. The man was an irreclaimable, selfish gambler, and had neither real love for Mary Merlington nor anything but a tinge of contempt for her paternal family. He wanted money; it was an essential that his present existence depended on; and to such as Elliston life presents but that one view—the racecourse, the card-table, and the *coulisses*. Before the year

was out poor Mary Merlington knew what her life was destined to be, and had fathomed the utter selfishness of her husband's character. She was of that sort that seem born to suffer. Not a word against her husband ever escaped her lips. Nobody knew better than she of what inferior clay her idol was made, but she was not going to make the world the *confidant* of her mistake. On the contrary, she was never without excuse for his shortcomings, albeit quite aware the bright future she had pictured was never destined to be realised. A bare two years saw Cuthbert Elliston gazetted out of his regiment, and every sixpence of that ten thousand pounds destined for his promotion, as well as his commission-money, gone. They had been at times vagrants on the face of the earth, but of late had struggled on in a small house in Ebury Street, Eaton Square, as the inhabitants exult in calling it. There is something in living near the rose, and Pimlico is ever loth to acknowledge its actual identity; and their sole reliable income was derived from Mrs. Elliston's settlement, which was out of reach fortunately of her husband's itching fingers. There were times, of course, when gleams of luck shone over the gambler's home, and, like all true gamblers, Cuthbert Elliston was lavish of his money when fortune favoured him; and, taught by dread experience, his wife always took advantage of the sunshine to store for those stormy days she knew would in due course follow. Many an expensive bracelet or cashmere, &c., did she buy in those days that she well knew were destined to return at half-price to the vendor before many months were passed. A woman with fair ability, and who really loves her husband, will learn pretty well anything for his sake; and Mrs. Elliston knew the "Racing Calendar," and what trinkets and gewgaws were always "returnable," as well as in days of yore she knew the book of the opera, or what prices to ask at a fancy bazaar. It was, perhaps, fortunate for Mary Elliston, on the whole, that she had been blessed with no family. If children might have consoled her

for those lonely hours which her husband's infatuation and their consequent fluctuating income condemned her to, still she was spared the harassing anxiety about their future which would otherwise have been her fate.

Last season had been on the whole a very good year for Mr. Greyson and his employers; and, though that flying but evil-tempered grey two-year-old had made an unpleasant hole in the winnings, yet the stake won over the Two Thousand, and the still larger one landed over Phaeton's Leger, had left a very comfortable balance to the good at their respective bankers. The Ellistons might have been described as in rather full plumage; and, moreover, Cuthbert fancied he saw a prospect of a tolerably prosperous season once more before him. No one knew better the infirmities of horseflesh than he did, the frailty of legs, the lamentable delicacy of the equine bronchial tubes, their susceptibility to cold, and their liability to that most provoking of all ailments, namely, the being a little out of sorts; or, in turf *argot*, "a little off," when backed for a large stake. We suffer ourselves in this wise, but obstinately refuse to recognise that our race-horses should be equally subject to bad days, and are apt to talk of malpractices because the gallant brute we have backed is not in such trim to fight out a ding-dong struggle as he was a fortnight ago.

Were not you, my friend, settled by that cucumber you devoured so greedily with last night's salmon, and did you not blow shamefully as you breasted the hillside next day, and let more than one bird sail airily away that ought to have bit the heather, simply because you were out of form? Race-horses suffer from *their* cucumber as well as ourselves, despite the setting-muzzle that it would be well for some of us we also should be endued with.

Still, there could be no doubt there were two rattling good four-year-olds in training on Riddleton Moor, and, better still, that the public were mistaken as to which was the best of them. Should the handicapper only form as false an esti-

mate of the respective capabilities of Caterham and Phaeton as it was quite transparent the racing world entertained, then the Two Thousand winner of last year must have the opportunity afforded him of winning a big race or two of that description before the year was out. Great *coups* of this kind were things Cuthbert Elliston revelled in mapping out, but the worst of it was so far they had rarely owned anything at Riddleton that justified the attempt to fly at high game. Usually they had to content themselves with small handicaps, over which, except at a very large outlay, only small sums could be won.

To carry off the Cæsarewitch or Cambridgeshire, and take sixty or seventy thousand pounds out of the Ring, was the dream of Elliston's life—a dream, by the way, that has begot many a gallant heart's undoing. Why cannot men recollect that backing horses is simply equivalent to playing against the bank at Monaco? The pull of the tables must beat you, more especially in these days, when the book-makers lay most inadequate prices. Fifty years ago, and the extinction of prize-fighting seemed most improbable. Fifty years hence, and there are signs abroad to show that Newmarket will have degenerated into a sort of Croydon, and the Derby have dropped to the level of the present Chester Cup. What will they *do* in those days of ripened cant and hypocrisy? To howl your way to Heaven after the wont of the Salvationists, or to get there by "water" after the manner of the Blue Ribbon people, will be probably exploded. All species of sport have been condemned as cruel, and life generally be of the dullest and limpest description, when the Buddhist religion, now so much virtually in vogue, will have been actually proclaimed. The rising generation worship inanition, and really have no energy for vice; leading their placid little lives without pronounced views of any sort.

We match not the dead men who bore us
At a kiss, at a song, at a crime.

Oh, no! It is a tepid generation, with neither pluck to sin nor to pray.

"I must ask you to write me a cheque before you go out, Cuthbert," said his wife, as they sat over a latish breakfast on a bright March morning, about the time that Jim Forrest was cementing his acquaintance with the Dancing Master, and beginning to accustom himself to that animal's unpleasant eccentricities.

"Upon my soul, you seem to be always wanting cheques," retorted her husband, irritably. "You know that the balance at the bank has got to carry us very far into the year."

"And you know that the rent, the butcher, the taxes, and such things must be paid," she rejoined, wearily. "I don't see myself why the horses shouldn't do something for us this spring. Caterham is by no means badly in for the City and Suburban—you said so yourself."

"Yes; and didn't I tell you at the same time that we can't afford to expose him for such a paltry stake as we should have to contend with on that race? The public have arrived at your conclusion also, and appropriated all the long prices. Considering the pains I and others have taken to educate the public, and demonstrate to them the rashness of speculating before the owners have satisfied themselves, I am really astounded at their childlike confidence. Caterham will run; but not *quite* so well as his backers anticipate."

"What about that grey colt? The Two Thousand is a nice stake; and for a very little outlay you might stand to win a tolerably round sum in bets."

"Don't talk of that accursed brute; a gold-mine—who could do anything if he were not possessed with such a fiendish temper. The cheapest thing to do with such brutes is to shoot them at once. Dispose of them, and you are still tempted to back them whenever they run. A bad-tempered horse, like a bad-tempered woman, is a thing to be out of as soon as may be."

"I have known bad-tempered women, though at times a little trying, make their husbands rare good wives; and a bad-tempered horse, that you know to be good, is always worth backing for a trifle. I have heard you say over and over again that when they are in the mood their very temper makes them bad to beat."

"The marrying a shrew, or the backing a savage, are two dangerous experiments at which the world only laughs when they recoil on your own head," observed Elliston, sententially. "I, at all events, have been spared the former, Mary, and enjoyed the luck of a better wife than most men."

A faint flush suffused Mrs. Elliston's faded cheeks at her husband's somewhat niggard praise.

"Write me the cheque, Cuthbert," she said, as she rose and, crossing the room, laid her hand fondly on her husband's shoulder. "Also, follow my advice: let the Dancing Master take his chance, and mind my usual ten pounds is on him."

"I will write you a cheque, Mary; and mind, you must make it go as far as you can. As for the Dancing Master, if anybody likes to pay his expenses at Newmarket, he can run; but I shan't. I don't think there'll be much opportunity of investing your tenner."

"It is as you will, Cuthbert, of course; but don't forget me if he runs."

"All right, I'll recollect; for the present, good-bye. If you're not going out I shall be home to dinner."

"You know I'm never out when you say that," she replied, softly.

"Pooh!" he rejoined as he opened the door. "We're too old for sentiment now; and jog along just as well as our neighbours without it."

Mrs. Elliston sighed. As if a woman ever grows too old for sentiment; and this man, remember, was her first and only love.

CHAPTER XII.

A CLERICAL TEA-PARTY.

MISS ROCKINGHAM, curiously enough, began to think a good deal about this Mr. Thorndyke. He was of a type she had never encountered before, if, indeed, she could be said to have as yet encountered him. She did not as yet know whether to be interested in him, or shocked at his most unorthodox views. The way he mixed up things sacred and secular seemed almost profane in her eyes. A parson whom she knew had actually been known to play cricket with his parishioners after church, and though it was rarely he gave such practical testimony as to his religious views, yet stoutly maintained there was no more harm in cricket than in country walks; that all honest courting, to which young people are very wont to devote a portion of their Sabbath, could be carried on quite as well while looking on at such healthy, manly games as cricket and football as in *tête-à-tête* country walks; in short, that Sunday was meant for innocent relaxation from toil and enjoyment as well as returning thanks to the Creator, and that people who held up their hands with horror at what they denounced as his impiety went to church in the morning to study their neighbours' bonnets, and devoted their afternoons to lying and scandalous conversation. Such a clergyman as this was a phenomenon that made Ellen Rockingham open her eyes with amazement.

Had she heard of or first seen Mr. Thorndyke at Cranley her mind would have been made up. She would have pronounced him a priest of Baal, and shunned him accordingly; but clerical society was more tolerant in York, and, though very far from endorsing the extremely broad views and muscular Christianity of the Reverend John Thorndyke, yet they recognised him as an energetic, hardworking man, who did a great deal of good in his way, and was much liked and respected amongst his parishioners. It was true his way

was not their way; they could no more have hurled (no other word expresses it) those short, stirring addresses at the heads of their people than Thorndyke could have preached one of their (if polished) somewhat monotonous discourses. Men who went to hear John Thorndyke felt no inclination to doze during the ten or fifteen minutes the nervous, fiery words fell from his lips; words, not of denunciation, as a rule, but of hope and promise, albeit he would rate the shortcomings of his sheep with bitter scorn and irony when occasion required, and those sombre-fleeced delinquents winced as they took the scathing rebuke to themselves, and felt that they had earned it.

Still his clerical brethren were compelled to admit one thing: his sermons might be unscholarly, undignified, vulgar rant, &c., and they were called all these, but there was nothing unorthodox in them, and his church was crammed. He preached extemporary sermons, and, though usually not invariably, from a text of Scripture. He seldom brought a Bible into the pulpit, but never omitted to place his watch on the cushion.

Ah! in these days of infinite verbiage, if those who manage our political and religious affairs could only know the virtue of a watch--could St. Stephen's and the pulpit be induced to pour forth that flux of vapid garrulity with an eye on the hour-glass, methinks even they would feel some shame that their platitudes should have so long vexed the ears of the nation.

"I am going out to tea, mother, if you don't want me," said Ellen, one afternoon as the sun floated in at the somewhat dingy sitting-room window. "Mrs. Primington has asked me, and says she has some people coming whom she is sure I should like to meet."

"Pray do, child; it is good for you. It is not well at your years to be cooped up in such narrow quarters as this. Dear Gerald, he did his best for us, and I don't complain.

But," she continued, with a faint smile, "it comes hard, dear, after having ruled it so long at Cranley Chase."

Poor Ellen looked round the room sorrowfully; she had done the best she could to make it tasteful. It showed all the delicate touches of a woman's hand in its arrangements, in the vases of bright spring-flowers, put artistically together, as only the deft fingers of the refined woman or the professional florist are capable of. Still, modest lodgings and narrow means can in no manner be brought to replace your own chateau, with its conservatories, conjoined with lavish expenditure, by any feminine artifice.

Mrs. Rockingham bore up bravely against her altered fortunes; but it was scarcely to be supposed she would not make querulous moans at times over the hardness of her lot. Besides, he for whom she had suffered so long and battled so bravely to keep things together had gone to his rest; and there were times when the widow craved earnestly for the time when she might be laid by his side. With Ellen it was different. She was young, and made of sterner stuff. The Puritan spirit she so cherished nerved her for her struggle with the world. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth" was a text ever on her lips, and she had wound herself up to the belief that she was destined to make expiation for her father's sin. It is wives and daughters who, for the most part, do penance when their male belongings have to face the upshot of backing hopes against figures, in trying to break the Ring or the bank at Monte Carlo.

"It is very odd we don't hear from Gerald," remarked Mrs. Rockingham.

"We must be patient, mother," replied Ellen, settling her bonnet at the glass above the mantelpiece. "Remember, he was never a good correspondent, and now, poor boy, he has to set to work to earn his living. It would come hard upon most boys; but it comes doubly hard upon such as he. Facing the world in grim earnest, I fear Gerald is going through an ordeal such as he doesn't much care to talk about.

And yet, mother, he was a Rockingham every inch, and faced disaster when it came as boldly as any one of our race. I have railed at him often for his indolence and his absorption in sporting pursuits ; but I felt proud of him that day he knew he was a beggar and his inheritance a myth."

The girl's face flushed, and her dark eyes sparkled as she recalled that scene in the library, in which her brother had jumped at a bound from boy to manhood—the self-possessed courteous irony with which he had dismissed Cuthbert Elliston. She had thought of him as a mere boy up to that, as a girl of twenty naturally does regard a brother of eighteen ; but henceforth she acknowledged him as the head of the family, and felt that Gerald's will and Gerald's word would be law. It was wrong and unchristianlike to hate any one she knew ; but Ellen was painfully aware that her feelings with regard to Cuthbert Elliston would scarcely stand analysis from that point.

When she arrived at Mrs. Primington's she found some three or four ladies, who, like her hostess, were rather Calvinistic in their religious views, also Mr. Brushley, the Rector of St. Olave's, and his curate, both gentlemen of as Evangelical a turn of mind as was compatible with clergymen who officiated within the shadow of the mighty Minster. The eccentricities of the Rev. John Thorndyke were a favourite topic with these good folks, generally ending in the opinion that no good could come permanently from such vulgarising of his sacred functions.

"It is, so to speak, my dear Mrs. Primington, like the doings of a mountebank at a fair. Mr. Thorndyke attracts people to his church because they hope to be amused ; they are amused, but you don't mean to tell me such addresses as his—sermons they can't be called—arouse any real religious feeling. Sermons should be thoughtfully written out, then as thoughtfully read. Mr. Thorndyke apparently regards them as after-dinner speeches, improved by a little jocularity."

"I don't think that is quite a fair sum-up of Mr. Thorndyke's sermons. I have only, it is true, heard him once. He is not conventional, but there is certainly no levity in his discourse," observed Miss Rockingham.

"Dear me," interrupted Mrs. Primington, "I hope I haven't done wrong, but Canon Durnsford, the new canon, you know, expressed such curiosity about Mr. Thorndyke that I promised to ask him here to meet him to-day. You surely none of you object?"

"My dear madam," replied Mr. Brushley, unctuously, "it is our lot to meet many people in this world of whom we by no means approve, but it is our duty to stifle our feelings. We can never tell what power to do good may be vouchsafed us. The new canon, Mr. Durnsford, you said? Yes, decidedly I shall be glad to make Durnsford's acquaintance."

If he did not quite hold with their opinions, Mr. Brushley highly appreciated the Cathedral dons in a social point of view, and secretly and sadly admitted that wines and the art of cookery were better understood by them than by those of his own way of thinking.

The canon and Thorndyke arrived almost simultaneously, and afforded a somewhat marked contrast. The Honourable and Reverend Alfred Durnsford was very different from the plump, rubicund priest that Mr. Brushley had pictured him. The tall, slight, aristocratic-looking new canon, with the suave, polished manner of a thorough man of the world, was by no means what the Rector of St. Olave's had imagined him; and the Rev. Mr. Brushley felt intuitively it was just possible that he and the courteous canon might not altogether amalgamate. He fancied he detected a slight touch of sarcasm in the soft-toned voice of the new dignitary, and sarcasm was a thing that Mr. Brushley both imperfectly understood and felt no little afraid of. Better, he thought, the bold outspoken utterances of John Thorndyke than this quiet, smooth, veiled speech, the real meaning of which he very imperfectly conjectured. It was odd, Mr. Brushley

could not account for it, and yet before five minutes had elapsed he was conscious of being ill at ease with Mr. Durnsford. He felt that the newcomer saw through him, that he penetrated the hypocrisy of his character, and knew him for the sham he really was, while to his intense disgust he saw the canon was unmistakably attracted to blunt outspoken John Thorndyke. There was no mistaking John Thorndyke for anything but a gentleman. Ellen Rockingham, much as she mistrusted him as a clergyman, had no misgivings on that point; as regarded the Rev. Mr. Brushley, she preferred that that question should remain in abeyance.

"I am told, Mr. Thorndyke, that you are great at cricket, and have rather a taste for field-sports," observed the canon, quietly, as he sipped his tea; "if so, you are fortunate in finding your life cast in, perhaps, the most sporting county in England."

"Great at cricket, ah!" rejoined Thorndyke, laughing; "I am afraid that's a thing of the past. I was in the Oxford Eleven; but I haven't the time to practise now, and only get a game now and again with my parishioners. If they only give me time to get my eye in, I can make it lively cricket yet. As for sport, I enjoy a gallop with the York and Ainstey, or a day's gunning, on the rare occasions it's my luck to get one, as much as ever; and Mr. Durnsford," he continued, with a twinkle in his eye, "if I was only sure His Grace of York wouldn't hear of it, I think I could shout with the best of them on the Town Moor at seeing 't' Leger 'won.'"

"You surely would never bring such a scandal on the cloth as to be present at a race-meeting," exclaimed Mr. Brushley.

"It's not exactly the scandal, it's the wiggling from the archbishop I am afraid of," replied Thorndyke, demurely.

"Which, I'll venture to say, you'll never get," observed the canon, smiling; "you were born a quarter of a century too late."

"And yet there are people who tell me I am too advanced in my views."

"The sporting parson is quite incompatible with the present state of religious thought," said Mr. Brushley, pompously.

"And what should you define to be the present state of religious thought?" asked the canon, softly, pouncing upon his victim in true purring feline fashion.

Miss Rockingham awaited with much interest her pastor's reply to this question.

"The phase of religious thought now dominating these isles might be explained—er—you understand, as a sort of craving—in short, an earnest desire for—for——"

"Quite so," murmured the canon.

"Desire—thirst, I might say, for——"

"A little reality," interrupted Thorndyke.

"For—for a higher enlightenment," said Mr. Brushley, triumphantly.

"Which, when interpreted, means?" inquired the canon.

"An elevation of the spirit," quoth Mr. Brushley.

"An elimination of humbug," said John Thorndyke, drily but audibly.

"I refuse to recognise such a word, sir, in connection with religion," rejoined Mr. Brushley, loftily.

"In connection with true religion, certainly, but there is a good deal of spurious coin in circulation."

"And your definition, Mr. Thorndyke?"

"Has not yet taken shape, but you may lay it down as an axiom that it is cant that makes religion distasteful. Good-bye, Mrs. Primington; good-bye, Miss Rockingham. Glad to have made your acquaintance, Mr. Durnsford." With which somewhat abrupt adieux Thorndyke took his departure.

Mr. Brushley walked away with a vague consciousness of not having been altogether a success in the canon's eyes; while Miss Rockingham, as she strolled homewards, was fain to admit to herself that her favourite pastor had not been so lucid as was desirable on the occasion.

CHAPTER XIII.

“HE GAVE YOU THAT RING.”

It suddenly occurred to Miss Rockingham that she was in need of some minor feminine trappings, and she accordingly wended her way to Coney Street in quest of them. Greyson's was undoubtedly the principal establishment that dealt in all such articles, and thither Miss Rockingham repaired. There were a good many people in the shop, and the attendants had their hands pretty full. Miss Rockingham took a chair, and quietly waited till some one was at leisure to attend to her. She had not to wait long, for a trim, auburn-haired damsel glided behind the counter, and demurely inquired “What she should show the lady!” Miss Rockingham gave her orders, and then glanced at the girl who was serving her. She was somewhat struck with her appearance, and more still with her manner. The girl gave the idea of being considerably above her station, and Ellen wondered she had not noticed her before.

“Have you been here long?” inquired Miss Rockingham, as she turned over a box of gloves. “I don't think you ever served me before.”

“I am not often in the shop,” replied Dollie, with the slightest possible elevation of the head; “I don't belong to it. Though, when I am staying with my uncle, and they are busy, as they are to-day, I often run in and help. Are those gloves at all the shade you require?”

“Ah! You're a niece of Mr. Greyson's. Why you must be Dollie Greyson, the daughter of the trainer. I have heard people talk of your riding,” said Miss Rockingham, with a slight touch of hauteur in her tones.

She might well say that, for she had heard her brother be considerably more enthusiastic on the subject of Dollie's riding than she conceived was at all necessary. She had said nothing about it, but had mentally pronounced Dollie

a forward minx, and wondered whether Gerald was likely to make a fool of himself about the girl, and Miss Rockingham was fain to admit that Dollie was pretty enough to turn the head of an older man than her brother. She knew, moreover, that riding-men were always fascinated by a good horse-woman, and, as these thoughts shot through her mind, Miss Rockingham's eye fell upon the ring which sparkled on the third finger of Dollie's little hand.

"A souvenir of Phaeton's Leger, I presume," remarked Ellen, a little sharply. "I hear, Miss Greyson, that your father won a great deal of money over it."

The blood rushed to the girl's face as Ellen lightly touched the tell-tale ring, and Miss Rockingham, as she marked it, remembered in an instant that Gerald had won some money over the race, and came to a rapid conclusion as to whose gift the souvenir was.

It was but a second or two before Dollie drew herself up and replied defiantly, "You are right, Miss Rockingham; it was given me in memory of Phaeton's Leger."

"You know my name!" exclaimed Ellen. "I suppose we *are* pretty well known by sight, at all events in and around York. Rumour may have told you that we also have our souvenir of Phaeton's Leger."

"I am sorry, very sorry," said Dollie, in a low tone. "I heard that the race was disastrous to you and yours."

"We want no pity," replied Ellen, haughtily. "We are not wont to make moan when the world goes against us. I'll take these, Miss Greyson, if you will be good enough to twist them up in paper for me."

Dollie said nothing as she deftly packed up Miss Rockingham's trifling purchases, but as she handed them across the counter could not resist murmuring in low tones, "Have you heard of your brother lately, Miss Rockingham?"

"What! You know him! It was he who gave you that ring!" exclaimed Ellen, quickly.

"Yes, I do know him, and he did give me this ring,"

returned Dollie, raising her long-lashed grey eyes boldly to her interlocutor's face.

“I should advise you not to accept such courtesies from one in such a different position from your own, however young he may be. You must be aware it can mean nothing. You will find yourself talked about in a way most irritating to your self-esteem if you are not careful.”

Dollie could stand this assumption of immense superiority no longer. “Your brother has been very kind to me,” she said, “but I don't think he sets quite so high a value as you do upon his present position.”

“You have seen him and know what he is doing?” interrupted Ellen, eagerly.

“I saw him a few days back, and know what he is doing,” returned Dollie, sententiously; “but further than that he is well I am at liberty to tell you nothing.”

Miss Rockingham bent her head haughtily, and swept out of the shop. Anxious as she was to know what her brother was doing she would not stoop to beg information on that point from the trainer's daughter. She felt indignant that this girl should be the *confidante* of her brother's plans while his mother and sister did not even know where he was. What could Gerald be thinking of, taking a cheat of a girl of this class as his adviser? If she could but see him to expostulate with him on his folly! And then it flashed across Miss Rockingham that their father's death and the ruin that had followed had changed Gerald from a boy to a man, that he had taken counsel from no one since, but had persistently thought and acted for himself. There was not much after all in his having given this girl a ring, considering he had won a good bit of money, that is for him, over a horse trained by her father, but it was strange she should know all about his movements, and have seen him so lately. Had she met him by accident, or was it design? And what could he be doing? He had recognised the fact that he had got his living to earn—he had told them so when he left

them—and in what manner had he set about it? No one could be more conscious of the difficulty that one brought up as he had been would have in doing so. And Miss Rockingham's eyes were quite as open to that difficulty as his own. In vain she puzzled, on her homeward walk, as to what he might be doing, and now half regretted that she had not swallowed her pride and tried to learn more from Dollie Greyson. Had she better tell her mother what she had heard? But then there was so very little to tell. Further than that she had been told by a person who had seen him lately that he was well. No. Upon the whole Ellen Rockingham decided to keep this meagre bit of news to herself. Her mother fretted quite enough about not hearing from Gerald as it was, and it was better not to revive the subject.

And what in the meantime were Dollie's reflections on her meeting with Miss Rockingham? She had taken the opportunity of introducing herself to that young lady, and had been most decidedly anxious to produce a favourable impression, and to establish in some sort an acquaintance with her; but she had not been prepared for the detection of her ring, and the very rapid conclusion that Miss Rockingham had come to concerning it. She was indignant at the haughty manner in which Ellen ignored the possibility of there being anything serious in the attentions of a young man in Gerald's position to a girl in her's. Position, forsooth! And Gerald at that present moment a servant in her father's stables! What would Miss Rockingham, who now looked upon her with such disdain, have thought, could she have known that fact? And Dollie, smarting under that young lady's hauteur, ground her little white teeth, and half wished she had thrown back the taunt in her face. She was glad though, immediately after, that for Gerald's sake she had refrained. "She didn't quite like seeing his ring on my finger," she murmured, with a little grimace of exultation; "and she liked still less my knowing where he was and what he was

doing. And still less she liked," added Dolly, with a little triumphant toss of her head, "my refusal to tell her anything about it; warning *me*, indeed! not to accept courtesies from him. I wonder what she would have said if she had known that I am engaged to him. Got myself talked about! When I am talked about in connection with Gerald I think Miss Rockingham's eyes will open a good deal wider than they did this morning."

Dollie had come down from Riddleton Moor to procure some books and music and other things not obtainable nearer than York; indeed, the Greysons paid periodical visits to that city to purchase all those articles which the home-farm failed to produce, and upon such occasions put up invariably at John Greyson's in Coney Street. Dollie had, of course, known Miss Rockingham perfectly by sight for some time; but as that young lady, though a very fair horsewoman, set her face against hunting as unfeminine, Miss Greyson had never before attracted Ellen's attention. However, had Miss Rockingham's manner been ever so conciliatory, Dollie would have told her no more about Gerald than she had done. She it was who had counselled his present line of life; and though she saw no way in which he was more likely to make money, and though her father's praises of "Jim Forrest" showed her judgment to have been sound on this point, still, she rather felt the position in which her lover was now placed; between the stable-boy, quite at the bottom of his profession, and the crack jockey, there is a wide gulf—a gulf, too, as she well knew, not always to be bridged—it being often a considerable time before a lad is afforded an opportunity of riding in public, and even then is apt to be put upon a horse which gives him little chance of distinguishing himself. It might be long enough before Gerald got his opening.

Dollie heard, too, plenty of talk about the downfall of the Rockinghams. The late Squire had been a popular man, as a gallant, open-handed sportsman is sure to be in the many-

acred county; and she heard much regret expressed that Cranley Chase had passed away from the old family. The presence of Mrs. Rockingham and her daughter in the city kept these rumours alive; while the fact that the victory of the outsider Phaeton on Doncaster Moor had been the *coup de grâce* to the dashing lord of Cranley Chase made a turf romance that had special interest for the sporting population of York and its neighbourhood. Dollie was destined to overhear many a bitter comment on her father's conduct. "Dal it all, the Squire had been a good friend to un always. It was downright mean of old Bill Greyson not to give t' Squire a hint to save himsel over the second string." Whispers were afloat, too, that Pearson and Cuthbert Elliston, leading patrons of Greyson's stable, had been amongst the biggest winners over the race, and that neither of these should have given the dead man a hint seemed monstrous in the eyes of Yorkshire. Both were well known in the county, and both were far from popular. Even his intimates were wont to say there was no trusting Cuddie Elliston, while, as for Sam Pearson, it was a current saying that "No one had ever bested him." Still, Yorkshire has a certain respect for this faculty; and though Pearson was regarded as a man who carried it rather far, and would have skinned his own brother upon occasion, yet public opinion did not get much further regarding him than that "Lawyer Pearson knew his way about; and you'd to get up main early in the morning to get a point the best of him."

It was right and natural that a lawyer should overreach you if he could; and that a Yorkshireman should want the best of a bargain in horseflesh, or some undue advantage in a wager, was all in the ordering of things. Pearson was not only tolerably free-handed but affected a geniality of manner which, if not quite current coin, was at all events near enough to pass as such. With Elliston the case was different: he was a sharp, tricky practitioner, not even to be trusted by his friends, endowed with a bitter jibing tongue, that had

rarely good to say of any one. Like most gamblers, he was lavish of his money when fortune smiled; but then he spent it chiefly on himself. In short, there was usually little satisfaction manifested amongst racing-men at the success of Greyson's stable, of which Cuddie Elliston was the guiding star; he and his partner Pearson were wont to keep their "good things" strictly to themselves; and, above all, did they object to the public participating in their *coups*.

Such remarks as these about her father and his principal employers made Dollie's ears tingle. Mr. Greyson would have been an honest trainer had his patrons been of that way of thinking; but with them it was simply a case of which way most money was to be made over a race, and Bill Greyson consequently was continually expending all his skill in preparing horses for contests which their owners had no intention of allowing them to win.

The odium of such proceedings naturally attached itself to the Riddleton trainer, and Dollie's father bore an unmistakably shy reputation in consequence.

CHAPTER XIV

TURF TACTICS.

DOLLIE had returned from York not a little put out with all the gossip she had chanced to hear about her father. She, of course, knew all about the horses in his charge. She followed their fortunes in the papers, and knew that they did not always win when expected to do so, but she was shocked at the idea that her father should be deemed capable of not doing his very best with them. She was much distressed that the poor Squire should not have been told about Phaeton last year. She had heard her father say that he thought he should "take the Leger," but she, like the public in general, supposed he meant with Caterham. She knew

that the Squire had died a ruined man, but she had not understood before that the clever finessing of her father and his employers had dealt him the finishing blow. She remembered Alister Rockingham when she was quite a little girl, a tall handsome man, with always a pleasant word for her and her mother. He had a few horses at Riddleton in those days, the management of which, though Dollie did not know it, was principally left to Cuthbert Elliston, and it was their questionable running which had led to his leaving Greyson's stable. Then, as now, the trainer bore the blame, which accrued simply from carrying out Elliston's instructions. Later the Squire had an inkling of the truth, and, though he never again sent any horses to Riddleton, was always on friendly terms with Greyson, and more than once indebted to him for a hint at the eleventh hour. It was this had made him so incredulous about Phaeton. So far he was right: Caterham was the best horse of the two, but the other was just good enough to win. Still the Squire made sure that if such a bit of turf tactics was about to be attempted he should have had a hint from Greyson, and in default of that stood stanchly by Caterham, with the disastrous result we have seen.

A day or two after her return her father observed: "Mind you have a tidy breakfast for us to-morrow, lass. Mr. Elliston and Pearson are coming to have a look at the horses in the morning, and I suppose they'll let me know then what they really want. The nags are very well, and will pick up a good race or two this spring, if they're wanted."

"I should have thought, father, men who kept racehorses were always anxious to take all the prizes within their reach, if only for the swagger of the thing."

Bill Greyson stared for a moment at his daughter in sheer astonishment that a child of his could still be so innocent with regard to the intricacies of the turf and the ways of its votaries.

"Yes, Dollie, I suppose they do like all the flourish and

swagger of pulling off a big race when they are young, but they very soon cease to care about bringing down a royal stag unless there's a lot of meat on the carcass. Do you understand me?"

"I think so. You mean men like Mr. Elliston and Mr. Pearson don't care to win races unless they can win a lot of money over it."

"Just so, child. Men like Mr. Elliston and Pearson, like the man you were reading to us about the other night, 'fight for their own hand,' and don't care much about the public," replied the trainer, sententiously.

"But father, surely this is very unsatisfactory for you?" said the girl, raising her large grey eyes to his face.

"I've got to get my living, girl," replied Greyson, doggedly; "and trainers and jockeys, like other servants, have to do as they are told. Our soldiers and sailors get hampered in that respect, too, I'm told," and so saying the trainer walked away.

Dollie pondered a good deal over her father's last remark. He was not altogether a free agent then, but in the hands of his employers, and Dollie had what the people in York said concerning *them* still ringing in her ears. William Greyson was indeed more in their power than his daughter could guess. Like many of his class he had passed through times of impecuniosity; and Mr. Pearson, far too shrewd a man not to buy any one it was worth his while to have under his thumb, had been only too happy to accommodate the trainer with a loan. Loans from Lawyer Pearson were of that kind that one never settled. Interest ran on. You were begged not to trouble yourself about it, and the millstone was round your neck in an incredibly short time.

And now occurred to Dollie another very awkward circumstance in connection with the visits of Messrs. Elliston and Pearson to Riddleton Moor. Both these gentlemen knew Gerald Rockingham, and the probability was that they would recognise him under the guise of Jim Forrest, the

stable-lad. Why had she never thought of this most likely occurrence when advising Gerald to seek service with her father? Surely it was the very last training-stable in England in which to attempt the bold stroke to fortune he aimed at. But the girl could not resist the temptation of seeing her lover constantly, and that had blinded her to the palpable danger that was now on the verge of occurring. Dollie knew both Cuthbert Elliston and Sam Pearson, although she had seen little of them during the last three years, in which she had principally resided at York with her uncle for educational purposes; but the question now was, What was Gerald to do? See him she must, and yet that was not so easy without attracting attention. Still, warned of the advent of that cousin, for whom she knew he nourished undying animosity, Dollie knew he must be. It would be absurd to suppose that this contingency had not suggested itself to the lovers previously, and it had been arranged between them that Gerald was to have due warning.

It was not quite so easy for the girl to see Gerald alone. If Miss Dollie were once seen to favour one of the stable-lads, tongues would run riot on Riddleton Moor, and let the thing once reach the ears of old Greyson the dismissal of the offender would be both prompt and summary. Still, the supineness of her mother gave the girl more opportunity than she would otherwise have enjoyed, and whether it's

Well to sever
Two fond hearts for ever,

as the song says, I can't say, but they are a little difficult to keep apart in these times.

Dollie found means to let her lover know that he must meet her at the low fence at the bottom of the orchard, which, abutting on a portion of the stables, was not liable to attract attention, and had occasionally served them in such stead before. Their meetings had naturally been rare, though they got a glimpse of each other daily, and in one's

teens, when smitten by the love-god's arrows, that goes for much.

"Gerald," she said, "I can only snatch a few moments to talk to you—you know how risky our meeting is, and that if my father had any suspicion of the terms we stand upon he would no longer hear of your holding your present position. Stop, don't interrupt me," she continued, as he made a sign of remonstrance; "what we have rather feared is about to take place. Mr. Elliston and his partner are coming to see the horses to-morrow morning!"

"Which comes to the same thing. Your father, of course, will know all about it; it is impossible that my cousin and Pearson will not recognise me."

"Not necessarily," replied Dollie. "Your companions and even yourself swathe your throats these chilly spring mornings pretty closely in woollen comforters. You must take an extra turn or two with your wraps to-morrow. I think, then, if you pull your cap well down over your brows, the complete change in your dress, and the idea of finding you in such a position being so utterly unexpected, will prevent any recognition on their part. Bear in mind, too, the owners come down to see their horses, and take very little heed of the boys that ride them. Besides, they both of them detest the Dancing Master, and are not very likely to take much notice of him. He cost them a deal of money last year, and I heard Mr. Elliston say that it was far cheaper to shoot brutes like that than to sell them, as you might then be tempted to back them once more on the strength of what they *could* do, and in defiance of your being aware that they wouldn't do it—in public."

"It's all very well for you to argue like that, Dollie; but no man fond of horses could resist looking over the Dancing Master just now. He's in the bloom of condition; Caterham won the Guineas and Phaeton scored the Leger; yet, when it comes to looks, they really are not in it with that queer-

tempered grey, and, what's more, would not be in it either when it comes to galloping, if the villain would only try."

"Does he go any better with you, Gerald?"

"Well, it's hard to say; there are mornings when he will stride along as kindly as possible, and be as nice a horse as a man can care to ride. Then, perhaps, the next day neither I nor any one else can do anything with him. He will always, I should think, be a very dangerous horse to put money on. I suppose I must follow your advice, and chance not being recognised; but I fancy to-morrow morning will see the termination of my engagement on Riddleton Moor;" and Gerald looked rather sentimentally across the fence into Dollie's charming face.

"Nonsense!" she replied; "do as I tell you, and it will be all right. If it could be avoided, no doubt it would be better; but it is a contingency that you were sure to have to face sooner or later; and now I must run away, I dare not stay longer. Good-bye, Gerald, dearest; and remember one thing—let nothing induce you to open your lips if possible; but, if you must speak, you cannot be too brief and husky." With which parting advice Dollie Greyson kissed her hand and sped up the orchard.

The next morning saw Gerald enveloped in many folds of woollen comforters, with cap slouched down and shoulders hunched up, on the back of the Dancing Master, wending his way with his fellows to the far side of Riddleton Moor. He complained to them in thick husky tones of the chilliness of the moor, and affected as much as possible to be suffering from a severe cold. The string had been leisurely walking about some time before Bill Greyson was seen driving a small waggonette across the turf towards them; in his two companions Gerald recognised at a glance the two men whose observation he was so anxious to escape.

"The horses are all well, you say, Greyson, but I don't know that there is much to be done with them. Caterham and Phaeton are so thoroughly exposed that they will have

to run a bye or two before they get well into a handicap. There's no money in cup-racing, and Pearson and myself infinitely prefer swelling our bankers' account to decorating our sideboards."

"Caterham, sir, would have a very fair chance of the City and Suburban," said the trainer, drily.

"Precisely what the public think, Greyson, and the public accordingly will have one more lesson about the imprudence of jumping to erroneous conclusions. Having, in their anxiety to grow rich, backed the winner of the Guineas, they will have the satisfaction of learning that this isn't his race, and paying their money accordingly. Ah! you have that ill-tempered grey brute out, I sec. Of course he is well—that sort always are. Like bad-tempered men, their contrariness keeps them in health. He don't improve in his manners?"

"No, sir," replied the trainer. "I suppose, though, he had better go to Newmarket on the off chance. Though I'm afraid we shan't take the Two Thousand this year."

"He don't go at *my* expense," sneered Cuthbert Elliston; "and, what's more, I don't intend the brute to eat at my expense either much longer. If Pearson here likes to send him, well and good; but I don't suppose he means to throw money away more than myself."

"No," replied the lawyer, laughing; "I've no money to spend in travelling a trick-horse about the country. The fact is, Bill, we are both going for Pibroch. Sir Marmaduke's got the money down in earnest, and declares he will win the length of a street."

"Well, sir," replied the trainer, quietly, "it's a pity not to run the Dancing Master. He's very fit and well just now; it's a big stake to pick up, and he might take it into his head to do his best. His sort do at times—more especially when you don't back 'em——"

"Now, look here," replied Elliston, sharply, "let's know at once what you're driving at. What are you trying to

persuade me to send that worthless brute to Newmarket for?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, Mr. Elliston, I've got a thousand to thirty about him. I shall probably be able to hedge if he starts, and thereby save my thirty pound."

"Ah! you want to save your thirty pound at my expense. We will think about it. Meanwhile let's see him gallop."

Pulling up, and handing the reins to Cuthbert Elliston, Greyson got out of the waggonette, walked across, and gave a few directions to the head-boy

"A good half-speed gallop, William," said he; "and bustle 'em up a bit in the last half-mile."

The string got into Indian file, Joe Butters, on last year's Leger winner, leading; Caterham laid next, and a very useful five-year plater, who had done the stable yeoman's service, followed; while the Dancing Master, with Jim Forrest in the saddle, closed the procession. Intent more upon concealing his identity than the business in hand, Jim was as nearly as possible deposited on the broad of his back as Butters gave the signal to go. The Dancing Master responded to the pressure of his rider's knees by a plunge and a couple of buck-jumps that would have proved too much for most lads, and landed Jim Forrest on the grey's neck.

"You haven't improved that amiable brute's temper an atom," sneered Elliston, in those sharp, clear, acid tones that had superseded the soft, *trainant* accents of his younger days; "and putting up such a young duffer as that to ride him is not likely to make him more tractable."

"He's not a bad boy, sir," replied the trainer, quietly; "but that grey colt's rather too much for any of 'em."

"By Heaven, he means going now!" exclaimed Pearson, as the Dancing Master, after shaking his head rather seriously, as if taking in the position of affairs, took hold of his bit and dashed furiously in pursuit. That he should speedily overhaul his leaders was nothing, they were only going half speed, and it was quite evident that it was just

all Jim could do to prevent the grey getting clean away with him. Still, Pearson and Elliston knew a galloper when they saw one, and the long, low, raking stride, and the way he ran up to his horses, impressed them strongly.

"By Jove!" said Pearson, "temper or no temper, a mover like that can never be said to be quite out of the race."

"Yes, he covers ground when he begins. But you don't suppose at Newmarket that they're going to canter at starting just to suit his convenience, do you? Why, they would have been half way to the winning-post before the grey beggar thought it was time to begin. Hah! Look at him now! Oh, you beauty! A platoon of musketry in the home paddock is about what you're fit for."

As the last words escaped his lips, the Dancing Master stopped as abruptly as he had started, and commenced to kick, and when he once more condescended to resume galloping his stable companions were finishing at racing-pace. Jim Forrest, with a view to escaping observation, stopped his ill-tempered charge some distance below the point where the others had pulled up, and walked him slowly back the far side of the gallop.

"Well, Greyson, they all look well and flourishing, but I don't see any opportunity of slipping them just yet; as I said before, the public have helped themselves to all the money about the City and Suburban—and I hope the public will enjoy the result. We must wait for our chance. It will come before the year is out. As for that grey devil, *I'm* not going to pay his train to Newmarket."

"Pity, too, sir," said the trainer, "not to have a cut at such a big stake on the off chance."

"No, Greyson; you are very considerate, but I'm not going to pay insurance on your thirty sovereigns. Stop! I'll tell you what I'll do with you. If you choose to pay the brute's expenses you may. If he wins I'll take the stakes, but the horse shall be yours. Remember, the winner of the Two Thousand will be worth money, and, if you take my

advice, you'll part with him to the first man that makes a decent offer."

"Done, Mr. Elliston! It won't be the first hundred I've made a big hole in by taking long odds; but still, what with the thousand I shall stand to win, and what the horse will be worth if he does win, it's good enough to chance."

"Glad you think so. I shouldn't have thought it so myself; but there is one thing you have rather overlooked—you will find it difficult to get any one to ride—all the jockeys worth having are engaged."

"That don't matter, sir," replied Greyson, as he got into the waggonette and resumed the reins. "In a case like this it's no use wearing money. I shall just put one of the lads up. Jockeys as a rule can't do much with a colt like the Dancing Master. If that horse is to win he'll have to do it himself; he's pretty certain to decline either assistance or interference. The only orders I should give the best man in England would be, 'Get well off, and then leave him alone.' And now, gentlemen, I should think you're about ready for breakfast."

Arrived at the house, Greyson ushered his guests into the dining-room, the table of which was spread with all the substantial luxuries of a genuine Yorkshire breakfast,—home-smoked hams, game-pie, kippered salmon, hot rolls, new-laid eggs, &c., with Mrs. Greyson, radiant in smiles and ribbons, presiding at the tea equipage. Like other invalids one has met, she could always make an effort for company. The gentlemen were both old friends of hers, and Elliston, indeed, not a little of a favourite. The sneering manner, habitual to him in talking to her husband, he entirely dropped in speaking to Mrs. Greyson; and Cuthbert Elliston's tongue had by no means lost its cunning when it came to charming a woman's ear. He gave a slight start of astonishment when Mrs. Greyson presented him to her daughter. He had not seen Dollie for the last three or four years, and in the pretty, bright-haired girl, with her trim figure and per-

fectly possessed manner, he could see no trace of the wild little hoyden only hazily remembered.

"And so you are Dollie!" said he, gazing at her with a bold stare of admiration which brought the blood faintly to her face. "Upon my soul, Greyson, I congratulate you. I never dreamt that the little tomboy of a few years back would grow up so pretty a girl. Pray, are you as fond of schooling the young horses as you used to be?"

"I don't think I ride any worse," replied Dollie. "I can certainly say my nerve is as good as ever."

"Yes," said her father, fondly; "she finished in the first flight with the York and Ainstey more than once last winter."

"Ah!" said Elliston; "what, you were the Miss Greyson that was often out with them when they met on the York side? I never had a turn with them myself, and always supposed it was some cousin of yours—a daughter of the Coney Street fellow. Gad! with that red-gold hair, those dark curly eye-lashes, and a neat-fitting habit, you must have made wild work with the young bloods of the York and Ainstey."

"I don't know much about that, Mr. Elliston," replied the girl, laughing. "They were all civil and courteous enough to me in the hunting-field—old and young—ever willing to do me a good turn, show me an easy place, or holloa to me not to try something beyond my powers. Will you take some more tea?—That ham, Mr. Pearson, is of mother's own curing, and we rather pique ourselves upon our hams at Riddleton."

"First-rate ham, Miss Greyson; and that's about the best game-pie I've peeped into, Bill, for many a long day. God bless my soul!" chuckled the sporting attorney; "if the 'good things' on the top of the moor were only half as good as those in the dining-room at the bottom, what millionnaires we should all be! Dear me!" he added, addressing the trainer; "only think of the good things that we two have not only stood in but pulled off. We have made a little bit,

Bill; but what's the use of a little bit?—we wanted a tidy house down here, then a moor in Scotland, then a pretty comfortable shanty in London. And that's where it was—we always play for too much; 'twas always either that Scotch moor or that town-house that beat us; turf-gambling is like building card-houses—you never know when to stop; you get the third story up with infinite trouble, and you always go for that fourth story, and down the whole thing comes, and you have to begin again. There's a time when I could have gone clean out of the business with twenty thousand in my pocket. I've seen many a bitter day since then, and would be glad now to get out of it for half the amount."

"Just the way with all you half-plucked ones," rejoined Elliston, jeeringly. "I play for the lot, and mean to have it yet. We'll be rum customers to tackle, Sam, when the autumn handicaps come round. Mark me, if we're not."

"Yes, Mrs. Greyson, just one more cup of tea; and, I can't help it, but I must positively ask Miss Dollie there for another rasher of ham. What with the way you cure 'em, ma'am, and the Riddleton air, I always feel that a second ham on the table leaves plenty of room for inquiry."

"Look sharp, old man," chimed in Elliston, as the trainer's wife beamed with satisfaction at the lawyer's compliment to her housewifery. "Every one has known for years that Mrs. Greyson is not only about the best-looking woman in the riding, but with the sole idea of what a Yorkshire breakfast should be. If ever a woman was tired of compliments, you should be, Mrs. Greyson; it is no disparagement, Dollie, to say we were born too soon, and remember your mother; but, my dear, you'll turn some of the young 'uns foolish before many months are over. Now, Sam, I've to catch the London train. We must make a start of it. Good-bye, Mrs. Greyson, good-bye. Our trap's at the door, I see. Wish you luck at Newmarket, Greyson; that is, if you still persist in such Midsummer madness."

"What does Mr. Elliston mean by wishing you luck at

Newmarket ? ” inquired Dollie, as the sounds of the carriage that was conveying her father’s patrons died away in the distance.

“He’s given me leave to send the Dancing Master to run for the Guineas if I like to pay the expenses.”

“Is it worth while, father ? ”

“Well, lass, you see, I’ve got a niceish bet about him. He’s wonderfully well just now, and he’s a flyer when he likes. It’s all the odds I’ve got against his liking, but I tell you he’ll make mincemeat of his field if he takes it into his head to try. I shall send that new lad, Forrest, with him. He can do more with the horse than any one.”

“And yet he nearly killed him to begin with.”

“Quite true, Dollie, but the lad has two great qualities of a horseman—hands and patience. The Dancing Master’s disposition is not heavenly, but he is more likely to run kind with young Forrest than with any one else.”

“And if he won it would be the making of him ! ” cried the girl, eagerly.

“Well, yes, he’d get another chance or two, no doubt, after winning the Guineas,” rejoined the trainer, as he eyed his daughter with no little astonishment. “But what interest have you in him ? Why do you ask ? ”

“Oh, none. Only I saw his first fight with the horse. As Mr. Elliston says, ‘I wish you luck,’ father,” and so saying Dollie tripped out of the room.

CHAPTER XV

“THE TWO TRIALS.”

DOLLIE ran upstairs. She wanted to be alone to think. Here was her dream on the verge of being realised. Next week Gerald would “don silk ” for the first time and be embarked on the career she had marked out for him. Had

done right in advising him to embrace such a hard and onerous business? And yet, with his aptitude for riding, his light weight, and nerve, conjoined with his apparent inaptitude and distaste for anything else, what better path in life was open to him? He was going through all the drudgery of his profession at present (your footman dubs himself a professional gentleman nowadays—why not?), and none knew better than she how hard that apprenticeship was. But then, again, was not the novitiate of all careers laid through stony places? The Church, the Bar, Medicine, what you will, did not men find bread and cheese hard to earn at first in all of them? It is not every soldier who becomes a K.C.B., nor every sailor who attains a seat on the Admiralty Board, and even when they do they will tell you, to use Sam Slick's words, their early life was "not all beer and skittles." There are always many more blanks than prizes in lotteries, and in none more so than the lottery of life. There was no career in which a competence could be realised in so short a time by skill, pluck, and prudence, as that she had counselled, always providing there was natural aptitude for the profession to start with, and that the luck, an invariable adjunct to success in any path, was vouchsafed the aspirant.

Still, Dollie could not refrain from a slight shiver as with her dear little practical head she counted up the chances. Her lover had got his opening far sooner than she had dared to hope, and yet what a very dubious one it was! Gerald's success depended mainly, not on his own skill, nerve, and determination, but on the uncertain temper of the brute he was to ride. Dollie thoroughly understood the Dancing Master. She knew her father's estimate of the horse, and she knew that her lover had formed a similar opinion. He had not her father's experience, but Gerald did know something about horses. What would he think of this chance when he heard of it? Dollie knew very well that any of the leading jockeys would feel ineffably disgusted at finding that destiny condemned them to bestride such a mount for a

big race. Gerald surely would not be so foolish. These unpromising chances have been the starting-point of many a man's life, and it is hardly likely that our first brief is quite what we would have chosen. Then Dollie wished exceedingly that she could be the first bearer of the news to her lover, and hear what he had to say about it; but, as before said, it was not easy to get speech of him without a little manoeuvring. And then, as the warm March sunlight glinted into the room, for the bluster was out of the month, and it had arrived at that lamb-like stage in which it is traditionally supposed to close its career, Dollie fell asleep. A pretty picture the girl made, seated in an old-fashioned black oak chair close to the open lattice, with her small hand buried in her red gold hair, and her long dark curling eyelashes sweeping her somewhat pale cheeks, for Dollie, though enjoying excellent health, had a somewhat delicate complexion, to which even the air of Riddleton Moor never gave a dairy-maid's colour. The breath fell low and regularly from the slightly parted lips, and gradually the girl's hopes, thoughts, and inspirations began to seethe and bubble in that most restless of all cauldrons—the sleeper's brain. She was on Riddleton Moor, and Gerald once again waged that dire struggle for mastery betwixt horse and rider; yet again a half-cry escaped the sleeper's lips, and a stifled murmur of “Killed, killed!—my God! killed at my bidding!” Then the grey, with lowered crest and drooping ears, crossed her vision, and a triumphant cry from Gerald rang in her ears: “Conquered all the same, Dollie; see—he's cowed, he's cowed.” Once again turned the picture, like the ever-shifting combinations of a kaleidoscope, and Gerald, stretched pale and senseless on a hurdle, with the blood trickling freely from an ominous wound in his forehead, passed, like Banquo's ghost, in ghastly procession athwart her troubled brain; then she was seated in a carriage on the famous Heath at Newmarket—Heath, mind, that Dollie had never yet seen. She saw the undulating emerald swathe stretch-

ing far away on every side as she had never seen turf yet, and comprehended at once a remark of her father's that had often puzzled her: "There are horses that won't run at Newmarket; the expanse of the Heath seems to cow them." The Two Thousand was about to be run. Oh, from where did they start? Could nobody tell her? She appealed to several people—people she did not know; but whose faces she saw distinctly in her dream; but nobody seemed to know anything about it, while every one seemed to wonder what *she* did there. Then suddenly she encountered Cuthbert Elliston, who, in answer to her mute appeal, pointed derisively to a place where some dozen or more of horses were kicking, rearing, plunging, and indulging in all sorts of equine vagaries; but, prominent amongst them all, like "Lucifer, Son of the Morning," in the midst of his satellites, was that handsome iron-grey colt, taxing all Gerald's powers to retain his seat, without troubling his head about the control of his unruly charge.

Then came a chaos in Dollie's dream, and the horses and riders were all blended in apparently inextricable confusion, such as one sees in some spectacle of the arena just previous to the whole mass tumbling into their proper places. Then came a burst of light, and a troop of gaily-dizened horsemen streamed in a clump across the plain, while another, in the far background, battled fiercely with a truculent grey steed. Again the scene becomes misty, and when the white fog lifts that contumacious grey colt is leading his field six lengths, and the roar of the Ring proclaims the fact that Bill Greyson wins, and the bookmakers have had a good race. Enthusiastic those children of the brazen throats and mystic circle whenever a neglected outsider comes to their aid. Once more the girl's high-strung nerves carry her away, and she pictures in her slumbers an objection after the race. Gerald has won; but they decline to award him the prize. She does not know what is wrong, but she is conscious that Gerald's claim is disallowed. She does not know the reason,

but is quite clear upon that point. He has won, and he has lost. Scored a big race, and buried a reputation; ah, why?—how? And then the tears well slowly under the long curled lashes, and Dollie once more subsides into dreamless oblivion.

Queer things these visions of the night-time—distorted pictures of our waking fancies, for the most part. Panoramas we usually imagine them; blurred photographs, and of very short duration, what they actually are.

But wherever there is a prohibitive ukase so also there is a contraband trade. Lovers, whose affair does not quite meet with the approval of the powers that be, are sure to arrive at an underground post. Did not the authoress of “*Mes Larmes*,” like the woodpecker, investigate a hollow tree in search of the Catullus-like effusions of young Mr. Pendennis? and did it not stand to reason that Dollie and Gerald also possessed a letter-box unrecognised by the Post Office officials?

In accordance with instructions so received, Gerald was by the low fence at the back of the orchard that evening.

“What is it, dearest?” he inquired, their first greetings over. “You said ‘something of importance.’ Does that mean good news for me in any shape?”

“I think so, but you will be a better judge than I of that. You are to be sent to Newmarket to ride in the Guineas.”

“By Jove! that’s a big opening,” exclaimed young Rockingham; “rather too big. You see that means riding against all the best form in England, and I can’t flatter myself I’m equal to that. But it’s not likely I’ll be put upon anything that’s good for much.”

“You are to ride your present charge, Gerald, and I’ve heard you say, as my father does, that, if he likes, the Dancing Master’s the best three-year-old in England.”

“I believe honestly he is; but, Dollie, I know the horse thoroughly, and tell you candidly that, as far as I am con-

cerned, I shall have very little to do with it. He will do as he likes, and George Fordham himself could do nothing with him if he is in one of his wicked moods. It's a bit of very doubtful luck. My precious cousin is not likely to overlook me at Newmarket if I am riding his horse."

"Why he never noticed you here."

"True; but I can't muffle up there. Men take stock of jockeys in a big race who never notice stable-boys. Then, again, Cuthbert Elliston hates the sight of the Dancing Master, he has lost his money over him so often; and, as the horse behaved particularly badly this morning, he never came near him to look him over. It was easy not to be recognised here, but at Newmarket it will be almost impossible to escape detection."

"And what if you are?" asked Dollie, proudly.

"Ay, I know I ought to say also, 'What if I am?'" rejoined her lover, sadly. "I ought to be thankful to get an honest living any how; but you see I can't quite forget the old pride of birth and position, and wince at the idea of Gerald Rockingham being seen riding races for a living."

"You'll have to face that, dearest," she rejoined in a low voice. "If you love me it ought not to seem so very dreadful. If you fear to face the world as a jockey how will you find the courage to marry a trainer's daughter?"

"You're right, Dollie," he replied, firmly. "All the world knows I'm ruined. It is well they see one Rockingham get a living by the turf. But did your father say positively he should send the horse to Newmarket, or is it to depend on the result of a trial?"

"No; he said he should chance it. That there was no dependence to be placed on the Dancing Master."

"He's quite right. He might win here and lose on the Heath, or *vice versâ*."

"And now, Gerald, I must run away, or else I shall be missed. I dreamt I saw the whole race this afternoon. I

fell asleep, and thought they all behaved very badly at the post, but none so badly as your horse, and then all was mist, and then I saw you win easily.”

“Good-bye, dearest,” said young Roekingham, gaily. “We want no better trial than that.”

“Good-bye,” whispered Dollic, for she resolved not to dash her lover’s spirits by telling him the finish of her dream.

* * * * *

It is early morning, and there is some little stir visible on Riddleton Moor. Under Joe Butters’s auspices some of the boys are carefully unsheeting three or four horses, tightening the girths, and putting a last touch or two to their toilettes generally.

“Now, young ’un,” said Mr. Butters, oracularly; “this is the Friday before ‘the Guineas,’ and, as usual, we are going to take the measure of our ‘Two Thousand’ horse.”

“I don’t suppose we shall learn much more than we learned the other day when Mr. Elliston was here to see,” said Forrest, sententiously.

“We may or may not,” retorted Butters; “we’re going to try that grey colt in real earnest this morning, regular weights, and all the rest of it; what they’ll be, Mr. Greyson only knows. If you can make your horse run honest, we shall know whether we ought to win on Tuesday.”

At this juncture the trainer himself arrived on the ground. Jim Forrest and three other lads are successively ordered to get into a weighing-machine already on the ground, and then Mr. Greyson indulges in some mysterious juggling with saddle-cloths and bits of lead. This apparently at last settled to his liking, there comes much accurate weighing of the saddles themselves; and then the trainer, assisted by Butters, personally sees to the placing them on the horses’ backs.

“Now, my lads,” says Greyson, quietly, as, his arrangements completed, he mustered them down at what they all

well knew was the mile-post, "you are going to ride a trial gallop this morning; and mind you pay strict attention to my orders. You, Sampson, on that three-year-old, will make the pace as hot as you can and as long as you can; but I reckon the half-mile post will see you about done with. Take Phaeton to the front, Matthews, and go on with the running as soon as Sampson has shot his bolt; while you, Tom, wait upon Phaeton till a hundred yards from home, and then go up with Caterham, strangle him and win. Now, Forrest, my only orders to you are, don't fidget your horse and win if you can. If he's running kind and free, take him along; if he sulks, nurse and humour him; but you are to be first past the post if you can."

The boys made no reply, but reined their horses back, and speedily got well together, the grey behaving, for a wonder, with singular propriety, enabling Butters to give the word "Go" to a very good start. The three-year-old, whose mission it was to make the running, dashed at once to the front, and the Dancing Master, who seemed suddenly to have completely changed his disposition, jumping off at the word, promptly took second place. Mindful of his horse's irritable temperament, Jim allowed him to stride along as he pleased, with the comfortable conviction that his mount, in racing parlance, was treading the leader's heels off. Soon after passing the half-mile post, the three-year-old making the running, in accordance with his trainer's anticipation, showed symptoms of distress, and Jim assumed the lead, his horse going strong and well.

"By the Lord! the grey walks in," ejaculated Bill Greyson, as, nearing home, Phaeton tried vainly to run up to the Dancing Master; and to any judge of racing it most assuredly looked as if Jim Forrest would win easily; when, suddenly, for no apparent reason, the grey swerved, and, bolting across the gallop, made the best of his way in the direction of his own stable, despite all the efforts of his rider to control him. Then a capital set-to between the four-year-olds resulted in the triumph of Caterham by half a length.

"Mr. Elliston's right," muttered the trainer. "He arn't worth sending to Newmarket, or anywhere else; however, go he shall this time and take his chance. The form, too, is right enough; and, if he'd only stuck to his work, I should have tried him good enough to win any Two Thousand. Yes, Joe," he continued, turning to Butters, "you may send 'em home now; that grey colt would spoil any one's break-fast. I suppose *he's* about got home by this?"

"No: young Forrest has got the upper hand of him again, and is bringing him back."

Mr. Greyson made no reply, but shook his head in moody silence as he mused over the Dancing Master's iniquities.

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE TWO THOUSAND."

THERE is much stir and bustle in the turf metropolis this April morning, for is not the first great three-year-old contest of the year to be decided in the course of the afternoon? Keenly are the respective merits of the candidates discussed by lords and legs, by backers and bookmakers. One name especially seems to be in all men's mouths, and that not the name of a horse, but that of a leading turf magnate. What did Sir Marmaduke Martindale mean doing? That astute tactician had two horses engaged, both were at Newmarket—well, said the horse-watchers—and each had been backed by Sir Marmaduke to win a heavy stake; but about which would profit him most by victory opinion differed, and was apt to be biassed a good deal by what would most benefit the speaker. Turf vaticination is more frequently the expression of the prophet's hopes than a genuine statement of opinion. Both horses figured prominently in the betting, and had more than once changed places in public favour. Some

old stagers who had witnessed much manipulation of the strings in their time, and who had been at first considerably staggered by the bold demonstration in favour of Bushranger made by Sir Marmaduke that afternoon at Tattersall's, laughed now, and declared it was a mere *ruse* to drive Pibroch back in the market; and it certainly looked like it now, as those most intimately connected with the stable were steadily supporting the latter, and seemed indisposed to invest money on Bushranger.

"Well," said Cuthbert Elliston to his partner, as they strolled up and down in front of the Rooms, "it is all right now; but I own Sir Marmaduke frightened me the day he put so much money on the second string. We shall land a nice little haul over Pibroch."

"Yes; if it comes off," replied Pearson.

"Come off! He's certain to win from all I hear, and Bob Broughton told me just now he had taken back all he laid against him; and Broughton knows what he is about as well as any man that goes racing."

"Yes; but there's no certainty about anything connected with racing, we both know very well. I've got a message for you from old Greyson."

"Why, he's not here, is he?"

"No; but he has sent Butters in charge of that grey colt, and bade Butters tell us from him that the colt is very fit, and will run well if in the humour."

"Perhaps he would; but then he never is. Did he try him?"

"Yes; but it seems the brute bolted, and therefore he is no wiser than he was before, as far as that goes."

"Well, it is his own speculation," replied Elliston; "he pays the entrance and all expenses connected with the horse's running."

"Hum!" observed Pearson, meditatively. "Do you think it worth while having a trifle on the Dancing Master between us? Just to save us. We stand to lose a good bit of

money over Pibroch, you know; and these rum-tempered brutes, if they ever win, always do when you don't want 'em to.”

“You can do as you like, of course; but *I* don't fool away last year's winnings in that fashion. Pibroch and Sir Marmaduke are good enough; and we can trust to the four-year-olds to do us a turn later on.”

Pearson walked away, still turning over in his mind the fact that Greyson had thought it worth while to send the Dancing Master to Newmarket. He was much more prudent in his speculations than his partner, and did not at all like the idea of letting a dangerous horse what is termed “run loose,” that is, unbacked, which might cost him a deal of money. Old Greyson he regarded as a very astute trainer, besides being very careful of his money; not in the least given to throw his bank-notes about rashly. He must have formed a very high opinion of this colt to have sent him all the way from Yorkshire at his own expense. The Dancing Master was almost friendless in the betting; fifty to one being, indeed, freely offered against him. Sam Pearson came to the conclusion that it would be as well to have a trifle on the horse, for fear of accidents.

And now flies, hacks, and carriages are all brought into requisition, and the motley crowd surges out of the town towards the famous Heath. The London special is in, and its freight, after scrambling for a hasty luncheon at the Rutland, also pour out to the scene of battle. Two or three minor events are decided, and over some of these speculation waxed high, for Sir Marmaduke and his school would gamble as fiercely over a small selling-race as over one of the great events of the year. But these at last are disposed of, and all the leading racing-men thronged to the Bird Cage to take stock of the Two Thousand horses. Sir Marmaduke's pair naturally attracted most attention. Of Pibroch good judges were warm in commendation; but much wonder was expressed that so much money should have been laid out on

Bushranger, who was pronounced peacocky, a three-cornered brute, and was very generally disliked. Had he been human he could not fail to have been much wounded by his own unpopularity; but, as a horse, he was naturally but little affected by the contumelious epithets applied to him. The Dancing Master attracted but little attention; now and again some man, who really did know a galloper's points, would ask eagerly, "What's that?" but the minute he heard the name took no further interest in the horse. There is seldom much enthusiasm about rank outsiders, whether on the race-course of Newmarket or the race-course of life; when they do win, a crowd flock round them, stare, and are wildly enthusiastic about their good qualities; but it needs success to reveal these perfections to the public.

At last the process of saddling is completed, and the competitors canter down to the starting-post. Sir Marmaduke exchanges a few words with his trainer, puts another thousand on Pibroch, which has the effect of making that noble animal one of the hottest favourites which has run for many a year; and, as he saunters up the steps of the Jockey Club Stand in his usual languid fashion to see the race, expresses the conviction that his pair will be first and second.

"He was always a beautiful mover," muttered Sam Pearson, as he watched the Dancing Master lobbing lazily down to the post. "I wonder what boy they have got on him, and if the young beggar has a decent idea of riding. Hang it! I'm blest if I don't throw away a tenner on old Greyson's spec." And, acting on this resolution, Pearson hailed one of the magnates of the Ring, who speedily accommodated him with five hundred to ten against the Dancing Master. Hardly had he done so when Pearson rather repented of the wager. The horses were now in the starter's charge, and the Dancing Master, sticking his toes in the ground, steadily refused to go anywhere near his companions.

"Steady, Jim," said Butters, as, taking hold of the horse's head, he caressed him, and tried, at first unsuccessfully, to

lead him towards the others. "Be patient, and don't give 'em a chance to start without you, if you can help it." And the horse, as if ashamed of the reproof, walked somewhat sullenly towards his fellow competitors. Two or three minutes and down goes the flag, whilst a roar from the crowd proclaim they are off, and, what is more, to an excellent start, with one notable exception. As the flag fell the Dancing Master gave a sudden plunge, and jumped off something like two lengths to the good; and, to the astonishment of the lookers-on, was soon sailing away with the most commanding lead. Jim's spirits rose. This was a bit of luck he couldn't have hoped for! Still he knew well what a very uncertain temper his mount possessed, and that, though it was fine just now, he might expect a change in the weather at any moment. His horse had taken hold of his bit, and was striding along in his very best form. Jim bore in mind what old Greyson had told him, that his only chance of winning was to let the horse do it himself, and not attempt to assist or interfere in any way with him. He sat as still as death, not daring to move, and, as he led his field down the Bushes Hill, the riders of Pibroch and Bushranger began to feel uneasy about this dark outsider, who showed no sign of coming back to them. After passing the Bushes the rider of Pibroch made a resolute attempt to get on terms with the grey, but it was useless, and in a few strides he dropped away beaten, and gave way to his stable-companion. Half way up the Hill Bushranger was in difficulties; but though he struggled on gamely in his trouble, and answered gallantly to the call his jockey made upon him, he only succeeded in finishing a bad second to the Dancing Master, who sailed past the Post four lengths to the good.

"Done crisp as biscuits!" exclaimed the Baronet; "who the deuce could have expected to find such a flyer amongst the dark division? Ah, Mr. Elliston, allow me to congratulate you upon such a *coup*. You've a clinking good colt in the grey."

Cuthbert Elliston's face, already settled into a sullen scowl, darkened considerably as he heard this pleasant observation. He had lost a lot of money over the race, which it was true the stakes would more than pay, but then again he had given away his horse—a horse now worth four thousand pounds or so, and Elliston was the last man in the world to part with anything representing that sum gratuitously. Then again, here had been a chance of winning a large stake at a comparatively insignificant outlay, and he had missed that golden opportunity despite his trainer's advice. No: Cuthbert Elliston's expression was by no means heavenly as he rejoined curtly:

"Thank you, Sir Marmaduke, but I hadn't a shilling on my own horse, whilst I stood Pibroch for a raker."

"Ah! the beggar couldn't quite stay," replied Sir Marmaduke. "Just what I was afraid of, but the t'other, ugly as he is, ran game enough. No idea, of course, you had such a clipper. Don't want to sell him, do you? He's in the Derby, of course?"

"No, I don't want to sell him, because he's not mine to sell," retorted Elliston. "Yes, he's in the Derby, but as he's the worst-tempered brute in England, and only ran straight to-day by a miracle, I don't recommend you to back him for Epsom."

"Sorry, Mr. Elliston, it was such a bad race for you," returned Sir Marmaduke, as he touched his hat in sign of adieu; "but I have had too great a twister myself to offer further condolence. If I can't buy your horse, perhaps you will part with your boy. He sat still and rode a queer-tempered horse with both patience and judgment. Two things not easy to lay hands on as joekeys go nowadays."

"I don't even know who he is, but one of Greyson's lads, I presume. Good afternoon, Sir Marmaduke," and Elliston strolled off to have a look at the Dancing Master.

That he should receive no end of congratulations from his acquaintances on his victory was natural, and what

annoyance these were to a man of his cynical temperament we can easily imagine. It has happened to many of us. To avow our intention of doing one thing, and then doing another, is so common a weakness of humanity; and when our original intention has turned up trumps to be complimented on our astuteness is a bitter but everyday experience. As he walked towards where Butters was proudly leading the Two Thousand victor up and down amidst an admiring crowd he encountered Pearson.

"A devil of a chance missed, Sam," he exclaimed. "Lucky for me I have got the stakes to draw upon to pay my bets. But, though you are fortunately not quite so deep in the scrape as myself, I'm afraid you've had a real nasty race."

"Not so bad as it might have been. I followed old Greyson's 'final,' and took five hundred to ten about the winner."

"The deuce you did!" replied Elliston, feeling still more disgusted with the race, if possible, on finding that his partner had followed the hint he had neglected.

"Yes; but, Elliston, do you know who it was that rode the Dancing Master?"

"Forrest, I think, I heard the young brute's name was. One of Greyson's boys of course."

"The winner *was* ridden by one of Greyson's lads, and that lad was your cousin's son, Gerald Rockingham."

"That young whelp is bound to be my ruin," growled Elliston, with a savage execration.

"Hum! I begin to think he may settle the score his father had against you in full," said Pearson. "Those acceptances of yours, remember, have never been found, but it does not follow that they don't exist."

"He'll get his living in some other stable, or, better still, his death," returned Elliston, with a scowl; "but he'll ride no more for mine."

"He's not likely to lack riding now," observed Pearson with a shrug of his shoulders.

CHAPTER XVII.

“YOU IMPUDENT LITTLE MONKEY.”

CAKES and ale were going the evening the news reached Riddleton Moor that the Dancing Master had won the Two Thousand. It was a great triumph. For the stable to follow up last year's successes by taking the first great three-year-old event of the season with an outsider, ridden by a Riddleton lad, was something to boast of. A hard man was old Greyson; but he told his wife to set the cups a-flowing upon this occasion, and to dispense Yorkshire hospitality to all comers.

Judge the excitement of Dollie as she saw the boy with the telegram, mounted on the best hack in the stable, coming up the road at a hard gallop, and waving the yellow tissue triumphantly over his head.

“Our horse in a canter!” he exclaimed; “Bushranger second, Pibroch a bad third. Here's the telegram, master;” and with a grin of exultation he handed the yellow paper to old Greyson.

The trainer looked leisurely over the tissue, which Dollie, with flashing eyes, read over his shoulder.

“You're right, father; you always stuck to it he was a great horse when he liked, and that Forrest was the best lad you had.”

“I never said that, my lass. What I said was, that he could do more with the Dancing Master than any of the other boys. The horse is more used to him, you see.”

“It's a great thing for Jim Forrest to win his first race, father, isn't it? More especially when it is such a big race as the Two Thousand.”

“Yes; and means a new frock for you, Dollie, and another mount or more before the season is over for him.”

But not only had Jim Forrest gone up several steps in the estimation of the trainer, but amongst the myrmidons of the stable he was suddenly regarded with much respect. He

had achieved at one bound the highest ambition of a stable-boy's life. He was a successful jockey! What career might not be open in that line to one who had steered the winner of the Two Thousand to victory? And already they regarded Forrest as blossoming possibly into a Frank Buckle or Jim Robinson, or other of those dead heroes of the saddle that figure in turf legends. There was great anxiety felt all round for the return of Butters and his charge; but that could not be expected as yet for two or three days. Although the Dancing Master had no other engagement, Butters had yet one or two other horses with him, who had been taken to Newmarket with a view to small handicaps, or selling-races, and so earn something to pay for their hay and corn.

But the morning after the Two Thousand brought a letter from Cuthbert Elliston that excited no little surprise in Bill Greyson and his wife. Dollie alone had a glimmer of the real meaning of it:—

“Congratulate you on your luck,” it ran; “if you take my advice you will part with your horse directly—for, of course, he is now yours. Sir Marmaduke Martindale asked if he was for sale, and of course puts the Dancing Master down as a veritable flyer, because he beat his own two highly-tried ones. One thing more. You will get rid of that boy Forrest at once; from what I know about him I don't choose to have him in any stable with which I am connected. I had no idea you had got hold of him. With kind regards to Mrs. Greyson and Miss Dollie,

“I am,

“Yours truly,

“CUTHBERT ELLISTON.”

“Well, that's a rum start,” as he finished the letter. “What can he know of this lad Forrest? Why, the boy's only been with us a couple of months or so; and he told me

he had never been in a racing-stable before ; and now I have peremptory orders to discharge him."

"But you surely won't do anything so unjust, father? Why, he has just rendered you a signal service. Besides, he must be a fine horseman. I have heard you say many times a more awkward horse than the Dancing Master we never had at Riddleton. Surely it would be parting with one likely to be of very great service to you."

"Don't talk nonsense, child. No trainer can afford to indulge in the luxury of keeping a servant whom one of his principal employers objects to."

Dollie winced at the word. She had accustomed herself to hear her lover called one of the "lads," or "boys," but there was something very repugnant to her in the term of "servant," and yet she knew that he was just as much so as any one else who looked after horses for hire. She was not a little put out, too, at the idea of Gerald's leaving Riddleton. She saw that he had made the first step in the career which she had marked out for him, and she naturally wished that that career should be worked out under her own eye. She had pictured him as the crack jockey of the Riddleton stables. Now he would, of course, have to leave them, and probably settle at Newmarket. She did not see very much of him as it was, but her opportunities of meeting him would be rare indeed should that be the case, so that upon the whole Dollie's gratification at her lover's triumph was not altogether without a mixture of alloy. Her father puzzled over Elliston's letter a good deal. He could not understand it. He had endured a bitter experience of stable-lads in his time, and the idea of parting with a good boy, unless for proved dishonesty, was a terrible mistake in his eyes. However, if Mr. Elliston said it was to be so, it must. There would be nothing for it but to give Jim Forrest twenty pound or so for his win, and tell him he no longer required his services. One thing Bill Greyson comforted himself with for the some-

what unfair treatment he was about to mete out to young Forrest, and that was, he could honestly recommend him for a situation in any other stable, provided he failed to get sufficient employment as a jockey.

The end of the week brought Butters, Forrest, and the horses home from Newmarket flushed with success; for to Elliston's great wrath Butters, having no orders to the contrary, had ventured to put Jim up again in one of the minor races, and this also Forrest had succeeded in winning, after exhibiting what the race-going community pronounced a very pretty piece of riding. He came back most certainly expecting a word of commendation from the trainer. That Greyson was somewhat chary of such words he knew well; but he was assuredly dumbfounded at that gentleman's first speech to him. Greyson was not the man to dally about an unpleasant task; and, though he honestly—could he have had his own way—would have been most loth to part with the boy, yet he felt that his employer's orders must be carried out without delay.

“Well, my lad,” he said, as he greeted young Forrest, “from all I hear, both from papers and hearsay, you've shown you can ride. If you only keep steady, and don't lose your head, I fancy your career as a jockey is marked out for you. You remembered what I told you about the horse, and stuck closely to it. I won a tidy little stake on it myself, and there's a pony for you for riding to orders,” and, as he concluded, Greyson put five five-pound notes into Jim's hands. “Mr. Elliston ought to have behaved handsome to you, though I don't want to ask what he's given you.”

“I got nothing from Mr. Elliston,” replied Jim, proudly; “not even thanks for being successful.”

“Well, yes, I'm sorry to say, you got something more than that. I've Mr. Elliston's strict orders to discharge you, and I've no alternative but to obey them. What he has against you I've no idea, and at all events he don't explain his reasons to me,”

"I can guess them pretty well," replied Forrest, "but that's neither here nor there. I don't suppose now I shall have much trouble about getting other employment. However, I have to thank you both for giving me a chance, and the liberality with which you have rewarded my success. I suppose I can have a day or two to look round?"

"Certainly, my lad," replied Greyson. "We have got to part, but you're not turned away, you know."

Gerald felt that he must see Dollie before leaving Riddleton, and that of course there would be no difficulty about accomplishing. A letter in that old post-office, unlicensed of the authorities, would, of course, find her, and Gerald had not much doubt about her calling speedily at that *poste restante* under existing circumstances. If a girl does not want to see and sympathise with her lover in his hour of triumph, when does she want to see him? She's scarcely like to trouble him in the dark hour of reverse, I trow.

But Dollie was full of exultation at Gerald's success, and full of hope for his future. Although dashed with disappointment and filled with indignation at the injustice dealt out to him at first, she had still the sense to see, when she thought it over, that the best chance of a jockey to make his way quickly was to be resident at Newmarket. It was annoying to her personally to be so separated from her lover, but then she was gifted with plenty of common sense, and reflected how many girls had to wait whilst their lovers made incomes sufficient to marry them on. He might be poor, he might be earning his bread in servile fashion, at the beck and call of any employer, like a Hansom cabman, but he was of the best blood in Yorkshire, and, say what you will, you can't knock that conservative idea out of the most radical woman's head. Even the broken-down gentleman who has forfeited his old station is always looked upon with a certain respect, little as it may be deserved, by the women of a class beneath him.

"Oh, Gerald!" exclaimed the girl, as she leaned across

the fence and kissed him, “I was so pleased, dear, when the telegram came in. How good of that cross-tempered grey thing to do his best for once.”

“A once, darling, that’s made me. It seemed as if the Dancing Master meant to repay the debt of gratitude for all the temper and patience he owes me. I daresay you heard what Mr. Elliston’s idea is of repaying me my jockeyship? Has he told your father the reason why he wishes me sent away?”

“Of course he recognised you, Gerald? But no—he has not told father anything about that. I saw the letter myself. He merely says vaguely ‘from what he knows about you.’”

“I am very glad of it, Dollie. I should like to remain Jim Forrest for the next five years, but I’m afraid my *incognito* can hardly be sustained even if Elliston says nothing about it. You see there are so many of my old University chums still there, and, of course, many of them come over to Newmarket. Then there are a good many other people who have known me elsewhere. And if I am to come off as a jockey I need scarcely say a great deal of my time must be passed at ‘head-quarters,’ so that sooner or later I’m afraid my recognition is bound to take place.”

“I can’t shut my eyes to what you say, Gerald, and, though to me it matters nothing, yet I wish for your sake, and the sake of your mother and sister, it could be avoided. Still, the more successful you are the more certain it is to happen. In these days the crack jockeys and the fashionable beauties occupy all the front places in the photographers’ windows. I want you to succeed, Gerald, and you must make up your mind to face the notoriety which attends success.”

“Yes; I fancy it’s all for the best,” replied Gerald. “You must forgive my wincing at two or three things. You have put me in the way of earning more money than I was ever likely to do in any other line; but a Rockingham riding *professionally* goes rather against the grain. Absurd!

No doubt. I'm not very old ; but I do know you can't afford to be proud when you have got to earn your own living. It's hard lines having to leave you, Dollie."

"Nonsense," replied the girl; "it's only what all men do who get engaged early in life."

"Engaged!" interrupted a voice from behind. "Upon my word, Dollie, I should very much like to know who you are talking to about being engaged, forsooth, at this time in the evening. Who is it, Miss? I insist upon knowing," continued Mrs. Greyson, as Gerald, at an imploring gesture from Dollie, retreated precipitately in the direction of the stables.

"Who is it?" replied Dollie, quietly; "some one, mother, I had something to say to."

"Don't answer me in that way, Miss; go in and see about supper directly; and we'll soon see whether your father thinks that because one of his stable-boys wins races it justifies him in keeping company with his daughter."

"If I'm to be accused of flirting, mother, with every one with whom I exchange a civil word about the place, perhaps I'd better be locked up at once. Yes, I met young Forrest; and I was only congratulating him on his success and on his future prospects. Oh dear, no; not *here*, I know," she added, with a little toss of her head; "but he told me he has got a good opening; and you know, mother dear," concluded Dollie, with a sweet smile, "men are engaged to *ride* as well as to *marry*!"

"Go along into the house, you impudent little monkey. Do you think I'm a mole, and can't see how things are going on? This comes of you trapesing over to York, and trying on gloves in your uncle's shop. You've got that giddy, that sooner than not carry on with somebody you'll be for carrying on with a stable-boy. Go in, do, you saucy little baggage; and if your father allows that young Forrest to be another day about the place he's a bigger fool than I take him to be."

I don't know that Dollie was much perturbed by this threat. She knew very well that Jim Forrest was already dismissed; and whether, after her mother's discovery, he was permitted to linger on another few days or so was likely to be of very little consequence as far as their love affair was concerned. She could never venture to give him another meeting now her mother's suspicions were aroused.

As for her father! Well, Dollie knew he never was seriously angry with her for twenty-four hours; so that upon the whole she was not much discomposed by the aspect of things.

Mrs. Greyson was as good as her word. Supper over, she ordered Dollie to bed in that peremptory fashion that few about her ever ventured to resist. Her petulant invalid manner and ways were simply the outcome of indolence, which her husband was too easy to dispute; but she had a pretty resolute will of her own when she was roused, and those who knew her best best knew it. Indolent dispositions are apt to be of this fashion; like the kettle on a slow fire, they take some time to boil, but boil over at last, and all the more wickedly from the hot water not being quite expected.

Mrs. Greyson had been a manager in her day, and the subordinates she had drilled and disciplined still stood no little in awe of the missus when she did look into things; so what with that, and Dollie's being now able to take her mother's place in some measure, the wheels of the *ménage* at Riddleton Moor farm ran pretty smoothly.

Dollie of late had rather rebelled against the maternal autocracy; but she had never ventured upon quite such a flippant rejoinder as to-night.

Dollie, after some slight deliberation, having yielded to her mother's mandate and retired, Mrs. Greyson at once acquainted her husband with Dollie's culpable conduct.

“ Damme,” said Bill Greyson, bringing his hand heavily down upon the table, “ this won't do. He's a nice lad, that

young Forrest, and I won't say but what he'll make a jockey in time; but I'm not going to have him sweethearting here with Dollie all the same. Leave him to me, Dorothy, and I'll see he clears out sharp to-morrow."

Mrs. Greyson would rather have enjoyed dealing with the audacious Forrest herself; but she knew her husband too well to suggest such a thing. She reigned paramount in her own domain; but Bill Greyson tolerated no interference with any of his own myrmidons, except in a very limited way from his right-hand man, Joe Butters. Though a rigid disciplinarian he was a kind master, and Jim Forrest received his *immediate* dismissal next morning in rather softer terms than he otherwise would have done on account of having so successfully passed his "little-go."

"Look here, Forrest," said the trainer; "I told you that you might stay on a few days with me till you had arranged where to go. I tell you now you must clear out this afternoon. From what I hear, you came to Riddleton fooling after my daughter. Now I'll have no caterwauling of that sort. You've a future before you if you behave yourself and keep clear of drink. One thing more: take my advice, and keep clear of muslin for the next six or seven years. It's brought as many of your profession to grief as spirits. Good-bye, my lad; and," added Greyson, as he shook hands, "don't let me hear of your hanging around Riddleton."

CHAPTER XVIII.

MR. THORNDYKE'S CRICKET CLUB.

YORK woke up in real earnest when the result of the Two Thousand reached it. I don't mean canonical York exactly, but that section that surged around Harker's Hotel, or congregated in the coffee-room of the Black Swan in Coney Street. People congratulated Thomas Greyson on the ex-

traordinary run of luck that was attending his brother's stable; but Yorkshire generally had no kindly feeling towards Bill Greyson. He had imparted the secret of last year to no one, except a very few intimates. He had not kept them out of the Caterham business in the City and Suburban, and many of the Tykes had lost their money both last year and this over that horse; and hardly a soul had been the better for the victory at Newmarket.

"Clever tactician, Tom, your brother: but he moight gie his friends and neighbours a turn, lad, when he's got such a clinking good thing as that last. Cuthbert Elliston, I reckon, made a mort of money out of the business. He's deep, deep as the Humber is Elliston."

It was in vain that Thomas Greyson protested his brother had told him nothing, and that he firmly believed the Riddleton people had won no money over it. Yorkshire knew better than that. Both the Greysons, Elliston, and Sam Pearson had won big stakes over it. A clever division, very, said the denizens of the valley of the Ouse; "they do not tell us mooch afore the race, that's sartain; but it's noa use they're telling us afterwards they ain't collared the brass."

Amongst other persons upon whose ears all this sort of talk happened to fall was Ellen Rockingham. She had gone into Mr. Greyson's shop, ostensibly to purchase some small articles she needed, but in reality quite as much with a view to coming across Dollie. She had not quite made up her mind what she would say to Dollie if she found her there—was not quite indeed sure that she would speak to her at all; but there was the fact, they could get no news whatever of Gerald, and the sole person who knew of his whereabouts was Dollie Greyson. The girl was not in the shop, being, as we know, still at Riddleton, but while buying the trifles she wanted she overheard the race for the Two Thousand discussed. Miss Rockingham honestly cared nothing for turf matters; still, she had been brought up in the bosom of a most sporting family, and naturally could not help knowing

something about them ; besides, Cuthbert Elliston and Mr. Sam Pearson were men only too well known to her, and whom she knew Gerald more than suspected of having a considerable hand in working his father's ruin. Once attracted by the subject, she listened to the discussion, which there was no attempt on the part of the speakers to make confidential, and gathered from it a most unfavourable opinion of both Dollie's father and his employers.

"Yes ; old Bill's never been in the habit of letting his neighbours stand in with his 'good things,' but if ever he ought to have given a man a hint it was over the last Leger. He knew how deep the poor Squire was in the swim that went for Caterham, and Rockingham had been a rare good friend to him in his early days. He ought to have told him to save himself over Phaeton."

"Yes, indeed ; but those Riddleton people think only of the money, and don't care how, or from whom, they get it. By the way, Greyson's brought out a new lad as well as a new three-year-old. The papers say that boy Forrest promises to be as good as the horse."

And this was the first Ellen was destined to hear of her brother's new career, and little did she dream then who Forrest was. In fact, so mechanically did the name fall upon her ear that when next she heard it she failed to recognise it.

"Well, Miss Rockingham," exclaimed Mr. Thorndyke, who had just entered the shop and caught just enough of the conversation to become aware that the late race at Newmarket was under discussion, "I presume you have enough county patriotism to be proud of Yorkshire's triumph over the Southron. I own I'm always glad when those Newmarket people get beaten on their own dunghill. They give themselves such tremendous airs, and think that no one can train a horse except on the Heath."

"Surely, Mr. Thorndyke, you don't approve of racing ? I know you go very far on the subject of field-sports, but not quite so far as that, surely."

"If you mean do I go racing, certainly not, although I can see no harm in one of my cloth doing so once in a way; but I did a good deal as a young man, and I still cannot help watching it in the papers."

Ellen could not understand Mr. Thorndyke; that he should entertain these extraordinary opinions and yet be a respected and popular parish priest, as she knew him to be, was inexplicable to her—it was so contrary to the views of the religious sect with which she had elected to identify herself.

"Will you come to my tea and turnout next Thursday, Miss Rockingham? It's simply the opening of my cricket club for the season. I entertain somewhat more substantially than tea, though. A few of my friends, also, are kind enough to patronise me. Durnford, with whom I dined last night, for one has promised to come."

Ellen stared. She knew that the new canon had already acquired the reputation in York of being very fastidious in the choice both of his friends and his cook, and that to be one of his intimates was already regarded as a social distinction.

"You look amazed, Miss Rockingham, at my being a friend of Durnford's. Our views, certainly, are not similar, but he's a clever man and tolerant, and by no means thinks it incumbent that every one should be of his way of thinking. Or," he continued, laughing, "do you think it is a hankering after the fleshpots, and that the canon's cook reconciles me to the canon's opinions? A good dinner is better than a bad one, and a full man is ever more open-handed than a fasting one. Brushley, no doubt, tells you enjoyment of the superfluities is wrong. Life without its superfluities would be a very dull business. Come to my party, Miss Rockingham, and witness the full measure of my iniquities. You will be a check upon me, remember."

And then Ellen promised to go, and bade him good-bye with a friendly little nod.

It was not particularly curious what had brought about

the intimacy between the two men. Mr. Durnford was careless with whom he became friends as long as there was something in them. He had all the tolerance of opinion that a man accustomed to mix in the great London whirlpool usually acquires. He admired Thorndyke's straightforward fearless character, and recognised his great ability. The canon was, in his courtly way, quite as fearless as Thorndyke, but he was not quite so outspoken. The world had marvelled much when Mr. Durnford accepted advancement other than metropolitan, but there are always wheels within wheels, and Mr. Durnford was privately informed it was merely a stepping-stone to something better; so he accepted an excellent country living a few miles from York, and a stall in the Minster, put a curate into the rectory, and took up his own residence for the most part within the city.

It was a lovely day in June, the week between Epsom and Ascot, when Miss Rockingham started off to keep tryst with John Thorndyke, and be present at the opening day of his parish cricket club. Only the week before the racing community had been electrified by the new boy from the Riddleton stable actually getting third for the Derby on a little-fancied outsider, and there were not wanted good judges who declared that young Forrest fairly outrode Blackton for the place, and Blackton was not only considered a good jockey, but it was well known had stringent orders to be in the first three if possible. People talked about this in York a good deal, and hailed the advent of another great north-country jockey, who should be famous as Bill Scott, Job Marson, or Frank Butler in a short time. Greyson was congratulated on having found not only the horse but the man, and then folks began to inquire why it was that Jim Forrest had not ridden the Dancing Master, instead of an outsider like Trumpet Major; on which it oozed out Forrest had set up his tent at Newmarket, and severed all connection with the Riddleton stable.

Miss Rockingham arrives at the cricket-field, and is

welcomed by John Thorndyke in most unclerical costume. A loose black surtout over his flannels is all the acknowledgment the rector pays to his cloth.

"You don't mean to say you are going to play?" said Ellen, smiling, as she shook hands, for even she, it not being Sunday, saw nothing extraordinary in his doing so.

"Yes. To tell you the truth it's a sort of pious fraud, Miss Rockingham. You see my folks don't like the opening match without 'parson's in it.' So he always is, and is very unlucky, too. You'll see what a duffer I am to-day. The fact is, you can't make a good score and look after your guests, and some other fellow always has to fag out for me—Oh, Durnford, you remember Miss Rockingham?"

"Could any one but an extreme Radical like you presume to ask such a question? But there's nothing a Radical won't ask."

"Yes, we are always desirous of acquiring information, whilst you dear old Conservatives forget nothing and learn nothing."

"Now, my dear Thorndyke, you know you only ask questions to annoy people, and it is usually successful. One either don't want to give information or hasn't any to give. A wise man hates confessing ignorance."

"Well," laughed Thorndyke, "my present business is to get a few runs, so I shall leave Miss Rockingham in your charge."

"Quite right. Go and get your few runs—can't be too few for the sake of your guests, who for once are thoroughly in accord with your Liberal principles."

"Is Mr. Thorndyke really a Radical?" inquired Miss Rockingham.

"Yes; and so are sensible men of all denominations in reality, if by Radicalism you mean that the world can't stand still. Ah! well hit!" he exclaimed, as their host sent a ball to leg for four. "Let's wait a minute and watch the game. Thorndyke is a really fine player."

Two or three more slashing hits, and then the Rector skyed one which his opponents promptly secured. A little ovation greeted his return to the tent, not on account of the half-score runs or so he had made, but as a testimony to his popularity.

"Dear me, Thorndyke, I congratulate you," said Mr. Durnford, with a twinkle in his eye. "I had no idea you were such a hand at lifting them."

"I always like to ascertain in these practice-matches what the fielding's like," rejoined the rector. "I know now these fellows can catch."

John Thorndyke's lunch was a great success. There were at least fifty people sat down in the tent, consisting of the elevens, the leading people in his parish, and a few personal friends like herself and Mr. Durnford.

Miss Rockingham could not but see what a popular man with his people this, in her eyes, most unorthodox clergyman was. It puzzled her. Could this man, so utterly unlike what she was accustomed to regard as one having religion, really have the welfare of those confided to his charge at heart? Still it was evident that he knew every one, and, from a word that dropped here and there, had, besides a personal, an intimate knowledge of their lives. She knew that, though he preached in what was to her most unconventional fashion, yet his words went home, and his congregation listened with rapt attention to those short stirring addresses. Was this man doing as much good, according to his lights, as those more rigid and ascetic clergymen with whom she had been so far associated?

She ventured, as they strolled about after luncheon, to put a question to this effect to Mr. Durnford.

"We have all our way of attaining an end, Miss Rockingham," replied the canon; "but I wish I could think I did half as much good as Thorndyke. I will tell you a little story. Before he came here Thorndyke had charge of a poor parish in East London. Calling one day on an artisan who was

just recovering from a long illness, he found the poor fellow unusually despondent. An excellent opening for work had presented itself, but all his wardrobe was in pawn, and he had no decent clothes in which to apply for it. There was no time to be lost or it would be gone. Thorndyke rose to the emergency. He quietly divested himself of the best part of his raiment, insisted upon the convalescent man putting on the clothes he put off, and then awaited his return. The man's application was successful, thanks to Thorndyke's promptitude ; he was just in time to secure the situation he coveted. No one ever heard our friend allude to it, but the working-men of that district have by no means been so reticent, and the incident gave Thorndyke the most unbounded influence over them."

Miss Rockingham was as much impressed with this story of John Thorndyke as his late parishioners, and turned it over in her mind many times.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEWMARKET.

JIM FORREST had taken up his residence at the Turf metropolis, and settled down steadily to the profession he had adopted. He has no cause to complain, for he gets a fair share of riding already, and that share is gradually increasing. Still, his practice lies at present amongst the smaller patrons of the turf, and though he is building up a solid reputation of being a safe and capable jockey, who can be depended on to do his horse justice, still his opportunities of distinguishing himself since the Derby have been rare. He won one or two small races at Ascot, but when he took part in the fray for the bigger prizes he generally had something under him that had little or no chance to win. Still, he lived like an anchorite for fear of putting on weight, took

lots of exercise, and conscientiously did his best with any animal entrusted to him. Yet, so far, it did not give much promise of becoming a lucrative profession as far as he was concerned. For his great *coup*, winning the Two Thousand, Cuthbert Elliston had given nothing, and Gerald felt much relieved that it was so. He would rather not take money, even if honestly earned, from the cousin he detested. His brilliant finish in the Derby had been equally unremunerated. The owner of his mount there had no idea his horse was so good, and was proportionately indignant at having him exposed, to say nothing, moreover, of his having backed the horse Blackton rode heavily for a place. His only comment on young Forrest's riding was that "It was a piece of d——d officiousness." Still, Jim heard daily now of the large gratuities which the more fortunate of his compeers received for winning big races, and, cheerfully remembering Bill Greyson's parting words, hoped that his turn would come.

He was returning to his modest apartments one evening after a long stretch across the Heath, for in default of having any horse to ride gallops he spent a good deal of his time walking over and studying the different courses at Newmarket, when he was suddenly hailed by a smart-looking groom.

"I say, you're Jim Forrest, ain't you?"

"Yes," replied Jim, sententiously. "What next?"

"Well, you're to come up to master's this evening—he wants to see you—Panton Lodge. Sir Marmaduke Martindale, you know. Shall I say you'll be there about nine?"

"Yes, say I'll be there," replied Forrest.

As the groom walked away whistling, he marvelled much what it might portend. It might mean getting some small share of Sir Marmaduke's riding, for the baronet was racing on so large a scale that he constantly had more work than the recognised jockey of his stable could manage. Jim was thoroughly awake to the advantage of being affiliated to a great establishment like Sir Marmaduke's, and felt grateful

that the baronet had been a little before his own time at Cambridge, so that he ran no risk of being recognised. Man is something like the ostrich, and when he has put his head in the sand thinks nobody will recognise him. Already it was whispered about the singular likeness of Jim Forrest to young Rockingham of Trinity, "fellow, you know, whose father died the other day and left nothing behind him—gone through every stick and acre, bedad, sir." Gerald had been of course well known at both Rugby and Cambridge, and some of his old associates had of course seen him in his altered circumstances, and, though rather puzzled by the silk-jacket and jockey-cap, were much inclined to the belief that Jim Forrest and Gerald Rockingham were one—a subject this much canvassed late at night in club smoking-rooms, resulting in opinion misty as the tobacco-wreaths from which it was evolved. That a racing-man like Sir Marmaduke should have heard this rumour was natural, and he looked somewhat curiously at Forrest when the latter was ushered into his sitting-room that evening, although that was not at all the subject on which he wanted to see Jim.

The baronet had tried his horses pretty highly before the Two Thousand. At six furlongs Pibroch was considerably the superior, at a mile there was little to choose between them, though it was still Pibroch for choice; but from this Sir Marmaduke argued that Bushranger was the better stayer. Both the Newmarket race and the Epsom one thoroughly confirmed that opinion. At Newmarket Bushranger was beaten easily by the Dancing Master; at Epsom he was done a short neck by Comet. In the one place Pibroch finished a bad third, in the other he was beaten for the same situation by Jim Forrest on the outsider Jacobite. From all this the baronet deduced that the Dancing Master was a rattling good horse. That he had run very badly in the Derby was true; but Sir Marmaduke thought little of that. He was a queer-tempered animal evidently, not

always to be relied on; and the Derby day apparently wasn't his day. Now Bushranger might or might not beat Comet in the Leger—it would be a close thing. Pibroch, the baronet felt quite certain, would never stay the course. His idea was to, if possible, buy the Dancing Master, and then with him to turn the tables on Comet at Doneaster. It was about this matter that he wished to have a talk with Jim.

"Sit down, Forrest," he said, "and have a glass of wine: what shall it be, champagne or claret?"

"I'll take a glass of claret, thank you, sir," rejoined Jim, as he seated himself, though respectfully, yet with a certain easy manner that attracted the attention, not only of Sir Marmaduke, but his two guests. One of these, a wiry little man, with dark bead-like eyes, and dressed in a single-breasted pepper-and-salt riding-coat, with a white cashmere scarf, exquisitely folded, and held together by a plain gold horse-shoe pin, was Mr. Pipes, his trainer; the other, a tall, blonde, lazy-looking man, about eight-and-twenty, was Captain Farrington, of "Limmer's Own," as the distinguished Lancer regiment to which he belonged was habitually termed, from their traditional devotion to that hostelry. An imperturbable plunger on racecourse or gaming-table, perfectly unmoved at either victory or disaster; one whom it took a good deal to move or astonish, innumerable as were the opportunities he gave himself in that direction.

"I want to know, Forrest," said Sir Marmaduke, after he had allowed Jim a minute or two in which to sip his claret, "who owns the Dancing Master. Of course I know he ran in Mr. Elliston's name at Epsom; but he told me when the horse won 'The Guineas' he wasn't his."

"He's Mr. Greyson's, sir."

"What, the trainer's, eh?"

"Yes. Mr. Elliston gave him to Mr. Greyson before the horse won at Newmarket."

"Is he for sale?" inquired Sir Marmaduke.

"I can't say, sir. I believe him to be Mr. Greyson's at this time."

"Why didn't you ride him in the Derby?" inquired the baronet sharply.

"I had left the Riddleton stable, sir; and wasn't asked to take charge of him in the Epsom race."

"How do you account for the display he made there?"

"He wouldn't try, I suppose; he's a qucer-tempered one, Sir Marmaduke."

"Ah! well, never mind him. Have you any objection to telling me why you left the Riddleton stable?"

"I cannot tell you that," replied Forrest, bluntly.

"You were discharged, I suppose?"

"Not exactly. I was sent away for neither misconduct nor incapacity; and, if you think it worth while to write to Mr. Greyson, he will, I am sure, give me an excellent character; but I'm afraid, Sir Marmaduke, you can't do much for me. Blackton does all your riding; although, if you could recommend me to some of your friends, I should be obliged."

"Give you a turn myself, Forrest," drawled Farrington, "when you want a little exercise. The four or five I keep in training never win, but are just useful when you want to see a race."

The captain so far spoke truth. The few he had in training were very moderate, but there was no cleverer hand on the turf in placing horses in small selling-races than he was, or anybody who backed them much more heavily than he did.

Sir Marmaduke meanwhile had been musing as to whether there was any truth in the rumour that young Forrest was a gentleman by birth. He noticed the refinement of his manner, the neatness of his dress, and, lastly, that his speech was by no means that of the class he affected to belong to. He began to think that rumour for once had not been so very far out.

"I tell you what, Forrest," he said, at length, "I've got rather more riding than Blackton can manage, and it is generally strewn about now. If you like to take a moderate retainer—say a hundred a year—to ride the second strings, you shall have what there is of it that lies within your weight."

"I shall only be too glad, Sir Marmaduke."

"Remember that entitles me to first call on your services. You can accept no other mount if I want you."

"I understand it so."

"Very well; then that's a bargain. You've nothing to do now but send Pipes there your address, and be wherever he orders you, ready to ride."

"Yes, and thank you, Sir Marmaduke, once more. Gallops, Mr. Pipes, of course, I shall be too glad also to ride if wanted. I can't have too much practice."

"You're right there, Forrest," said the trainer, breaking silence for the first time. "It's the work on the exercise-ground that has made half our crack jockeys. If you like to throw that in the contract, there'll probably be something for you to rasp up most mornings."

"I'll call up, Mr. Pipes; and now Sir Marmaduke, with many thanks, I'll say good night. Good night, sir."

"Good night, Mr. Forrest," replied Farrington, without thinking. "By Jove!" he said, as the door closed behind Jim, "the fellow made me clean forget he was only a jockey."

"Ah!" exclaimed Sir Marmaduke, "he struck you in that light, did he? So he did me. There's a report, you know, Charley, that Forrest is only an assumed name, and that the lad is a gentleman by birth. Have you heard anything about it, Pipes?"

"No, Sir Marmaduke, but this chap struck me as a deal better bred 'un than they are mostly. He's no hair about the heels, so to speak."

"Well, anyhow I've done no harm by engaging him. From the way he did Blackton on Pibroch out of the place

at Epsom there's no doubt the fellow can ride. And now, Pipes, I'll unfold to you my great conception. I'm going to buy the Dancing Master if I can, and win the Leger with him. Judging it through the Two Thousand running, he ought to beat Comet, as he beat Bushranger much casier at Newmarket than Comet beat him at Epsom."

"So he did, Sir Marmaduke. I should judge him a 5lb., if not a 7lb., better horse than Comet."

"Just so, Pipes; and now let me point you out another thing. The Daneing Master runs in Forrest's hands—he don't in those of the next lad who steers him; we know he's a queer-tempered horse. It's just possible Forrest, whom he knows, is about the one jockey he'll run kind with."

"Yes, Sir Marmaduke, I understand your game thoroughly; and I'm not going to say but what it's a good one. Difficulties there'll be, no doubt, even if we do succeed in buying the grey."

"Difficulties!" said the baronet. "Of what sort I should like to know?"

"Well, Sir Marmaduke: if you get the horse, I suppose you mean putting Forrest up at Doncaster. Blackton will very likely give trouble about that."

"He will do as he's ordered," said the baronet, tersely

"Certainly; but he's engaged as first joekey to the stable, and, if you put him up on Bushranger instead of the Daneing Master, he'll say you're not acting fair by him."

"D——n it all! these jockeys are getting a deueed deal too cheeky. Does Blackton think we can't get on without him?"

"I don't know," replied the trainer; "but it would be very difficult to fill his place just now. You can always count off those quite at the top of the tree on your fingers, and of course they all have retainers; and you can only get them if their first master doesn't want them; and he may elaim them at the last moment even then. No; it would be awkward if Blackton turned sulky and sent in his jacket."

"They're getting a devilish deal too bumptious, the whole crew of them," retorted the baronet, moodily.

"By gad! yes. We ought to be empowered to birch 'em up to eighteen. Sort of law the Jockey Club should pass if they were any use," said Farrington, as he lit a fresh cigar.

"Well, gentlemen," said the trainer, "it's your own fault, a good deal of it; you spoil 'em, instead of keeping them in their places. There's another thing, Sir Marmaduke. The Dancing Master, after the beating he got at Epsom, is—supposing him to be anything like the colt we think he is—at a very nice price at present. It's quite evident that none of those connected with him have any confidence in him. He ran unbacked for the Two Thousand, so I am told; and Broughton tells me the stable had next to nothing on him for the Derby; but the minute he comes into your stable you may depend on it he will become a great favourite with the public, and you will have great difficulty in backing him to win a good stake."

"Yes, there is something in what you say, Pipes; but I rise to the occasion. We'll keep the buy dark, and leave the horse at Greyson's."

"Well, Sir Marmaduke, that might do; and please remember I've nothing in the world to say against Greyson. A very capable man, and thoroughly understands his work; but there's a very queer lot connected with his stable, and, if Greyson hasn't been very much maligned, he's done some queer things in his time. I don't say he *wouldn't* do the horse justice; but then again, when Doncaster came round, we mightn't find him quite so fit as we should like to see him."

Mr. Pipes had all the jealousies of his calling, and by no means relished the idea of allowing a horse, the property of his master, to remain in the hands of a rival practitioner.

"Pish!" retorted the baronet; "you're as troublesome to deal with as you say Blackton will be."

"Excuse me, Sir Marmaduke; I willingly acknowledge

Greyson's ability. I only put it to you, Do you think it advisable to leave the horse in his hands?"

"I should think he would do his best for me, just as I suppose Blackton will see that the Dancing Master is more likely to do his best for Forrest, whom the horse knows, than he is for himself."

"He—he—you'll excuse me, Sir Marmaduke; but the idea that any one can make more of a horse than he can is the very last that can enter or be got into Blackton's head. No, sir; amongst the leading jockeys there isn't one who don't believe he can give his brethren seven pound, and how much better he is than the smaller fry the machine's not made that can calculate."

"It's no use discussing these things further now," rejoined the baronet, rather irritably. "It will be quite time enough to settle all the details when I've bought the horse. There's nothing more to arrange, I think, Pipes."

"Nothing, I think, Sir Marmaduke. You've done a good bit of business in engaging that lad Forrest. I only hope you'll be as fortunate about your bid for the horse;" and then, in obedience to the baronet's hint, the trainer rose, and, with a quiet "Good night, gentlemen," took his departure, leaving his employer and Charley Farrington to discuss tobacco and the Racing Calendar till far into the night.

CHAPTER XX.

A SHARP SKIRMISH.

"It is rather a curious discovery this, and I can hardly imagine Cathbert Elliston behaving, as I am told he did, to Gerald Rockingham if he knew of the existence of these little bits of paper," muttered Mr. Writson, as he sat in his office before a half-emptied box of papers. "I wonder whether Mr. Elliston is aware of the extent of his liabilities!

Anyhow, it is my duty to make him aware of them. It is clearly my business to recover as much of the money as I can, and, though rumour says he is a very difficult man to get money from, yet, like a refractory lemon, when you get it in the squeezer, legal proceedings extract what juice there is, as a rule. Elliston must be in funds just now. He had a very good year on the turf, and he's begun by winning one of the big races this year. Men like him fluctuate a good deal, but his affairs should be at the flood at present. He must have supposed that the late squire destroyed these bills, but even that would hardly account for the exceedingly bitter feeling Gerald tells me he displayed towards them all almost over his father's grave. The only way to account for it is that singular instinct in human nature which always leads us to hate those we have cruelly injured; and from what I gather in these papers Cuthbert Elliston had no little hand in the squire's ruin. I wish I knew where Mr. Gerald was. I should like to tell him what I propose doing, although his final instructions were comprehensive enough. 'Do the best you can, Writson, and recover all you are able out of the wreck for my mother and sister. As for me, I can take care of myself.' "

Still, Mr. Writson was so anxious to communicate with Gerald before firing his first shot at Elliston, that he sent a note down to Mrs. Rockingham to ask for his address. An answer speedily arrived from Ellen to the effect that they had no idea of where he was, nor had they heard from him for some months, and were just as anxious for news as Mr. Writson could be. Miss Rockingham had now become very uneasy at her brother's mysterious silence. Had anything happened to him? What could have become of him? It was so unlike Gerald's conduct of late to keep them in ignorance of his movements. There was but one person she knew of that seemed to be cognisant of them, and, reluctant as she felt to apply to her for information, Ellen at length determined that she would see Dollie Greyson if she could.

Dollie had not been having a good time of it latterly at Riddleton by any means. Her father, it was true, thought no more of the episode with Jim Forrest after that young gentleman's departure; but do you suppose Mrs. Greyson was going to let her daughter off so easily? No; the mothers that bore them don't let their girls off in that fashion when they are detected encouraging the ineligible. Dollie was destined to hear allusions to her absorbing interest in Jim Forrest's engagements of all sorts; not daily, but, like a liberally presented tonic, they had to be swallowed about every three hours, till at last Dollie's patience gave way. It is not easy to bear with a persistent nagger, and Mrs. Greyson was gifted beyond the generality of her sex in that way. It was not the first time that Dollie and her mother had differed by a good deal, and the girl's pet refuge under these circumstances was, if she could compass it, always a visit to her uncle Thomas at York. There was often a difficulty about it—Mrs. Greyson violently opposed it, but Dollie was cunning of fence, and persistently started her hare every evening, till at last Bill Greyson, weary of the wordy war between mother and daughter, and thirsting for peace and quietness, autocratically settled the question with a sharp "Pack up your things to-morrow and go, in God's name. I'm sick of this perpetual bickering between you and your mother."

So Dollie speedily found herself once more installed at the shop in Coney Street, and, after her wont, taking an occasional turn behind the counter. She kept a keen lookout for Miss Rockingham, being, indeed, quite as anxious to see Ellen as Ellen was to see her. She was not at all dissatisfied with the last passage of arms between them, and held, moreover, this advantage over Gerald's sister:—she was in his confidence, while Ellen was not. She knew where he was, what he was doing, what were his hopes, and what prospect there was of realising them. His last letter, indeed,

had told her of his being retained by Sir Marmaduke, and, of course, Dollie thoroughly understood that was another step up the ladder. Bill Greyson's daughter thoroughly understood the *prestige* an engagement by a big stable conferred upon a young jockey. Then she had implicit faith in her lover, and was of a sanguine temperament, and one of the things she was anxious to accomplish during her visit to York was establishing friendly relations of some sort with Miss Rockingham. She knew that she would have to submit to being treated in a rather patronising sort of way. Ellen was much too well assured of her family and position ever to trouble her head about it; but her manner to her inferiors, although always snave, was apt to be a little imperious, and Dollie knew that at all events, to start with, Miss Rockingham would regard her in that light; and Dollie, under the circumstances, rather chafed at the idea of not meeting her future sister-in-law on equal terms.

Much to her astonishment, Dollie was interrupted one morning at her piano by an intimation from her uncle that Miss Rockingham was in the shop, and asking to see her. The girl gave one glance at herself in the glass over the fireplace, and, that being satisfactory, tripped down stairs to see her visitor.

"I am told you want to see me, Miss Rockingham," said Dollie, as she glided behind the counter. "What can I do for you?"

Ellen scanned narrowly the girl who addressed her. She took in the neat *petite* figure, the sunny auburn hair, the grey eyes, with their long curling dark lashes, and realised again that Dollie Greyson was an unmistakably pretty girl. Pick her to pieces, of course, you could. Her nose, albeit not the least of the *retroussé* order, was not unimpeachable, and her mouth, though garnished with white regular teeth, was open to criticism; but what cannot one pull to pieces? Is not Addison held up to us as a model of pure English,

and does not Cobbett point out half-a-dozen grammatical errors in the great essayist of Queen Anne's time? A terrible iconoclast that Cobbett, ex-serjeant of Her Majesty's Infantry of the Line, believing little in anything or anybody, and tearing the veil from a good many brazen images the people had set up.

"I should imagine, Miss Greyson, you could pretty well guess what I was desirous of seeing you about. We have heard nothing of my brother for so long that we are getting anxious about him. Besides, his lawyers wish to communicate with him on business. You professed, the last time I saw you, to know where he was."

Dollie felt a great inclination to fire up at the term "professed," but she gulped down her indignation, and answered quietly,

"I know where your brother is, Miss Rockingham, and am very glad indeed to be able to tell you that he is doing right well in his new calling."

"What is he doing?" inquired Ellen, sharply.

"Please don't think me rude," replied Dollie, in her most conciliatory manner, "but I am pledged to secrecy on that point. I can't tell you—I really can't."

"I can't suppose that any pledge of secrecy you may have given can possibly be looked on as applying to his sister," rejoined Miss Rockingham, loftily.

"I was to tell nobody. I promised him not."

"You promised Gerald not," said Ellen, slowly. "Miss Greyson, is there any place where I could speak to you for five minutes in private?"

"If you would step upstairs we should not be interrupted," said Dollie, as she motioned to Miss Rockingham to come round the counter, and led the way upstairs.

Ellen glanced round the drawing-room, to gather, as women intuitively do, some knowledge of this girl's character from her surroundings. The books, the music, the nicknacks, all

betray to their sisters some conception of what the presiding goddess may be like in disposition and pursuits; and Ellen had made up her mind that the daughter of the Riddleton trainer, whom she had heard of as distinguishing herself with the York and Ainstey, would undoubtedly show herself masculine in her tastes. But Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, an odd volume of Shakespeare, one of George Eliot's novels, and an open copy of "Gil Blas," were not suggestive that way any more than the songs and music scattered about the piano; and Ellen felt in a moment that this girl was very different from what she had hitherto estimated her, and further that this was likely to be a much more serious affair for her brother than she had as yet deemed it. If Dollie combined feminine attributes and refinement with her witching horsemanship, she was fair enough to warrant any young man going wild about her.

Dollie motioned her visitor to a chair, and then with a quiet "We shall not be interrupted here, Miss Rockingham," left it for Ellen to begin.

Once more Ellen was no little surprised. "Wherever could the girl have picked it up?" she wondered, but Dollie's easy self-possessed manner was quite that of a lady receiving an equal. There wasn't a particle of pertness or self-assertion—it was simply the air of a lady accustomed to mix in the best society, and who had been used to receiving morning-callers all her life.

"Miss Greyson," said Ellen, at length, "are you still resolute in declining to give me my brother's address?"

Dollie nodded in the affirmative.

"If you will give me that I need trouble you no further, as I could then ask him the questions. I must, if you persist in your refusal, ask him."

"I cannot give it you, Miss Rockingham, without his consent; but I will write, if you like, to him for permission, and tell him what you say about the lawyers requiring it."

"Would you mind explaining to me how it is you are so deep in my brother's confidence?" said Ellen, looking her young hostess straight in the face.

Dollie flushed a little, and hesitated a moment before she replied,

"I don't know. It is, perhaps, always difficult to say why people give you their confidence. I can only say I know your brother very well, Miss Rockingham, and he has given it."

"You are evading my question. We come back to where we were some time ago. You don't suppose that ring and a boy's idle gallantry mean anything? If you are deluding yourself with any dream of that sort it is only charitable to awaken you in good time. A flirtation with my brother, including an underhand correspondence, believe me, Miss Greyson, will do your reputation no good."

"How dare you say such things to me?" cried Dollie, with her cheeks in a flame, and her eyes flashing. "You know nothing of what terms your brother and I may be on."

"The better they are the worse they are for you," retorted Ellen, sententiously

"Miss Rockingham," said Dollie, mastering her temper by a violent effort, "Gerald—I mean your brother—never uttered a word to me that a girl need be ashamed to listen to."

"Perhaps not," replied Ellen; "still, nothing but trouble can come of it. That a Rockingham should marry a girl in your station is, of course, impossible."

Dollie shot a wicked glance at her tormentor. "And yet, methinks, I have read the legend of the Lord of Burleigh," she retorted.

"Yes," retorted Ellen, tartly; "and we have heard of King Cophetua and the Beggar Maid. *They* were rash enough to marry out of their class, and make fools of themselves; but gossip might have told you that *we* are ruined; besides, perhaps you may remember that in the ballad of the

Lord of Burleigh the young lady never felt quite comfortable in her new position,—

But a trouble weighed upon her,
And perplexed her night and morn,
With the burthen of an honour
Unto which she was not born.

You, Miss Greyson, will be marrying family, but certainly not property ”

“What have I ever done to you, Miss Rockingham, that you should taunt me in this fashion? Upon what terms your brother and I stand exactly you don't know; and from me never will know. I will give him your message, and I fancy now there is no more to be said between us;” and, as she spoke, Dollie rose, drew herself up, and clearly indicated by her manner that the interview was at an end.

To say that Ellen was nonplussed would faintly express Miss Rockingham's feelings. She was much too polished of fence to show it; but she could not conceal from herself that she, Ellen Rockingham, had been put down quietly by this chit of a trainer's daughter whom she had intended to patronise. There was nothing left for it but to retreat in good order. She bid Miss Greyson a haughty farewell; and reflected, as her hostess courteously marshalled her downstairs, not only that she had taken very little by her visit, but that the probability was Gerald was very deeply compromised with Dollie Greyson. Dollie, too, was almost as much dissatisfied with the result of the interview as her visitor. She had meant to be conciliatory—she had tried to do her best in that direction; but she felt that, far from doing that, she had simply incurred that young lady's disdain and dislike; that Ellen now regarded her as a designing hussy, whose head was turned at the idea of marrying a gentleman, and who failed to realise what a hopelessly bad speculation Gerald was as a husband.

“There is only one bit of consolation,” murmured Dollie,

as she soothed her nerves with a cup of tea, "I think I've established us both on the same platform at last; we have, perhaps, a better chance of becoming friends that way than any other. I wish I had kept my temper; but that Gerald could only regard me as a toy to amuse his leisure hours was more than flesh and blood could bear. Gerald shall scold me as much as he likes; but to be lectured by his sister, because he has fallen in love with me, is trying a girl rather too hardly."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE JULYS.

BUT the long glorious July days have arrived, and with them come not only the end of the season—a circumstance with which this story has little to do—but that large meeting at the back of the Ditch, where we all wear the lightest and most unconventional costumes, the slouchiest of hats, where we smoke endless cigars, consume cup by the pailful, commit flirtation unlimited, and back winners unceasingly, at least, as Whyte-Melville sings (on quite another subject) "It is so we are trained and taught." But, ah me! these trainers and teachers! When we come away at the end of the week we find that the grass must have been damp, and that we have caught a severe cold, that those buckets of cup have not agreed with us, that a dozen cigars a day make one feel dreadfully "chippy" in the morning, we have misgivings that we have said a good deal more to Mrs. Golightly than was quite discreet, and above all a sad conviction that our Monday's account is very much the reverse of a winning one.

Still, what veteran punter or juvenile plunger ever misses that quiet meeting at the back of the Ditch held in the dog-days? The Golconda of Ascot has failed us, and the Ophir of Goodwood is yet to come. That the racing at the New-

market July Meeting is good is notorious, and it certainly is regarded as a battle-field upon which the hungry backer is apt to get the better of his natural enemy the bookmaker.

Sir Marmaduke had been a prominent figure at Ascot, where the betting had been unusually heavy. The baronet's speculations had been not only successful but of a magnitude rarely witnessed. It was known that he had been a very heavy loser this year, notably over the Two Thousand and Derby, in both of which he had supported not only his own horses but in the latter race the Dancing Master as well, believing him to be a thoroughly good horse; and it was further announced that he had declared it was only money lent, and that he would win it all back before Goodwood. The Ring looked somewhat glum over the Ascot settling; it had been one of those sunny weeks so rarely vouchsafed to the gentlemen, and most of the leading turfites had been good winners over the meeting, whilst, as for Sir Marmaduke, the bookmakers vowed he had gone pretty near to fulfilling his boast.

The baronet was installed at Panton Lodge, eager for the fray, it is needless to state, the day before the meeting began. Report spoke highly of a flying filly in his stable that was to make her *début* in the July Stakes. Atalanta was said to be a veritable clipper. She was as good as Bushranger at even weights; she had beaten Pibroch at 10 lbs.; there hadn't been such a filly seen on the Heath since Crucifix's day; these, and many more such *canards*, were in the air concerning her, and it was no secret that the baronet had trusted her with a very large sum of money in the forthcoming race.

"It is very awkward, Sir Marmaduke," said Mr. Pipes, who had ridden down from the stables as soon as he found his patron had arrived, and requested an audience, "but it might have been worse. Something might have happened to the filly instead of to her jockey."

"There's no chance whatever, I suppose, of Blackton being able to ride?" inquired the baronet.

"None. I went to see him again just before I came up. He's quite comfortable, and there's no more harm than a broken collar. It's set, and he'll soon be about again, and well as ever, but it's no use thinking about his riding this meeting or even at Goodwood. The bone won't be knit firm enough to rely upon."

"How did it happen?" inquired Sir Marmaduke.

"He was giving Pibroch a pretty sharp gallop, and the lad, who was busy unsheeting Atalanta, threw the head-piece over his shoulder—careless young idiot! Pibroch shied badly at it, and shot Blackton over his shoulder, and a broken collar-bone was the result."

"It's deuced lucky, Pipes, I engaged that lad Forrest to ride. I suppose we must put him up."

"There's nothing else for it, Sir Marmaduke. I don't like putting a lad up with so little experience, especially when I hear you have got such a lot of money on it. But he's as good as any one it's possible to get now."

"And the filly's all right, eh?"

"She's fit to run for her life, Sir Marmaduke, and in my opinion should win. One never can quite tell in a field of youngsters, but you know how very high we have tried ours, and I can only say, if one turns up to beat her, it must be a very, very smart colt, indeed."

"I suppose all Newmarket knows about Blackton's accident by this?"

"Yes; and I daresay it's been wired to town; besides, only on my way here Broughton hailed me—he'd just arrived—with 'Filly all right, Pipes, I hope. They're laying rather easier odds to-day in London against her.'"

"Ah! gone back in the betting has she? I hadn't time to go down to Tattersall's before I left. Never mind, I'll stroll down to the Rooms this evening, and if any of the bookmakers open their mouths too wide I'll have another thousand on."

"Well, Sir Marmaduke," said the trainer, as he took up

his hat, "I can only say Atalanta's good enough to win nineteen Julys out of twenty; and, after what we saw at Epsom, I reckon this lad Forrest's good enough to win on the best horse, and I fancy we shall see him do it to-morrow. By the way, sir, if they give him a chance in the Stewards' Cup at Goodwood,—and as third in the Two Thousand, and only fourth in the Derby, they can't put a big weight on him,—Pibroch ought to take a deal of doing. He's wonderfully well just now."

"Ah, Pipes, time enough to think of that when we've got through this meeting, and carried off the Julys."

"I hope we shan't be disappointed. Good night, Sir Marmaduke."

Now one of the first persons to know of Blackton's mishap was Cuthbert Elliston. He had come down to Newmarket after his wont on the Saturday, to take stock of the morning gallops on the Sunday and Monday, and pick up as much information concerning the horses trained on the Heath as he could manage to come by. He and his partner Sam Pearson divided their duties somewhat in this fashion. The lawyer, living at York, chiefly superintended their horses at Riddleton, and to him the collection of all racing information from the northern stables was entrusted. The horses at Greyson's were chiefly owned jointly, though each had one or two exclusively his own individual property. They sometimes differed about the policy of buying this or that, and the Dancing Master had become Elliston's exclusive property in this wise, Pearson having no fancy for the horse while his partner thought well of him. To Elliston living in London, and so within easy distance of Newmarket, the gathering of news from the south-country stables and most of their joint betting-transactions were entrusted, and in watching the gallops on the Monday he witnessed Blackton's mishap. Of course, the two men constantly amalgamated, Pearson usually coming south for all important meetings, just as Elliston went north for York and Doncaster. The

two partners differed in one thing—the lawyer was very much the more cautious of the two, and never could be persuaded to play for such bold *coups* as his associate. He might not win so big a stake as Elliston, but then, on the other hand, Sam Pearson never stood to be hit anything like so hard as his associate.

Cuddie Elliston having had his quill-feathers most ruthlessly plucked in the days of his youth, had, when he turned hawk, developed that overwhelming rapacity that characterises the dog when it takes to sheep-worrying. Like that relentless marauder, which will run a score of sheep to death to gratify his carnal desire for a leg of mutton, so would Elliston stick at no trifles to arrive at the possession of a hundred pounds; and the more tortuous and dubious the path that led to its acquirement, the greater the fascination the pursuit seemed to present to him. To an old turfite like Elliston the consequences of Blackton's fall presented themselves at once. He saw the fall was a bad one, that the jockey was severely shaken, and in all probability would not be able to ride Atalanta the next day. The thought at once flashed across Elliston what was to be got out of this. Of course he was *au courant* with all the rumours concerning the Panton Lodge crack, but none knew better than Elliston what a difference the want of a capable jockey might make to a horse's prospects. He rapidly ran over in his mind who Bobbie Pipes, as he called him, could get to take Blackton's place. He knew the riding obligations of all the leading horsemen at Newmarket, and speedily arrived at the conclusion that Mr. Pipes would have to be content with a very inferior artist in the saddle upon this occasion. Now what was to be made of this little bit of information that had come to him early and unexpectedly? To the majority of men it would seem nothing, but Cuthbert Elliston's scheming brain was not long before it evolved something out of the accident that might tend to its owner's advantage.

There was in the Julys a horse called Newsmonger, about which Elliston possessed excellent information. It had been tried considerably above an average two-year old, and the stable were very sanguine about its chance, should any mistake have been made with regard to Atalanta. Tom Pycroft, one of the half-dozen first-class horsemen of the day, was the accredited jockey of the owner; and Elliston at once jumped at the conclusion that he would be something like 7 lbs. better than any rider it was now possible for the Panton Lodge people to get hold of for their filly. Atalanta might be a flyer; but an artist like Pycroft, with a clever colt like Newsmonger under him, was quite likely to outride whatever boy Mr. Pipes might now be able to pick up. The deduction was obvious: he had already backed Newsmonger for a little, but now he would telegraph to town at once, and go for a rattling good stake upon that animal; and Elliston rode straight off to the office and acted at once upon this inspiration. This it was that had a depreciating effect upon the status of Atalanta in the price-current on the great turf-exchange.

Elliston was very well pleased when he found, on the arrival of the special, that the filly had deteriorated in the London turf-market, and chuckled over his own astuteness in having so promptly taken advantage of the accident, thereby procuring a longer price against Newsmonger than was now obtainable; but when he strolled into the Rooms in the evening he was destined to be somewhat put out of conceit with the result of his manoeuvre. At first it certainly seemed as if Blackton's fall had brought about the very consequences he had foreseen; but he forgot, as people sometimes will, that he had contributed not a little towards the fulfilment of his own prophecy. Atalanta was evidently not so firm a favourite as she had been, while the anxiety to back Newsmonger of course brought about a rapid reduction in the odds proffered against the Panton Lodge filly. The babbling of tongues was a little stilled about

eleven by the entrance of Sir Marmaduke. The Ring watched eagerly to see what he would do, for by this time Blackton's accident was known to every one, and that Atalanta was without a jockey was the current gossip of the evening.

"Want to back yours, Sir Marmaduke?" said a knowing little man with eyes like gimlets in their capacity for going through one. "Let me put you down two monkeys to one once."

The baronet shook his head. Six to four had been the best offer yesterday, and now "Two to one Atalanta" resounded through the room. Suddenly the stentorian voice of a leviathan bookmaker from the hardware country rose high above the din with the cry of "Here's five thousand to two Atalanta, or any part of it." Twice was the offer repeated, apparently unheeded by Sir Marmaduke, but hardly had the bold speculator shouted his war-cry for the third time than the baronet quietly rejoined,

"You can put it down to me, Plyant, and twice if you like."

But he of the hardware country shook his head as he answered, "Once is enough, Sir Marmaduke."

"I'll take two thousand to a thousand Atalanta," roared Bob Broughton, and with that the re-action set in like a mill-stream, and another half-hour saw the filly once more firmly established as first favourite at her old price.

"Have you heard whom they have got to ride Atalanta?" inquired Elliston of a friend, who left the rooms with him.

"No, and I am puzzled to think who it can be. It is so easy to say who it can't, and I know Reardon is going to run that brute Hemlock, just to keep Job Temple off the filly's back. He stands badly against her, and has gone for News-monger, and, as luck will have it, has first call of Temple. He never dreamt of running Hemlock, who is only half-trained, till he heard of Blackton's accident. Nevertheless, from the way Sir Marmaduke snapped up Plyant, it looks as if they had got hold of somebody they consider good enough.

However, the baronet's always sanguine, and may be they haven't after all."

Elliston as he walked home began to fear that his speculation was not quite so good as he had thought it. Still, Sir Marmaduke was a cool hand, and not likely to blench at a slight fall in the barometer. He had shown more than once that he could meet disaster with quite as unmoved a front as he could victory, and, though young in years, was already far too well versed in the vicissitudes of the racecourse to expect the glass always to be at set fair.

Jubilant was Jim Forrest that evening when summoned by Mr. Pipes to an audience at the Panton Lodge stables, adjoining which the trainer's comfortable house stood, to find for what he was wanted. It was a great chance to be on the crack of such a powerful stable in a big two-year-old race like the July Stakes, and as he listened to Mr. Pipes's instructions Jim felt that he was on the verge of winning another step or two up the ladder.

"I reckon, Forrest, you'll have a tolerably easy job, but remember men at the top of your profession have fooled away races again and again from over-belief of that kind. Now pay attention to what I say to you, and remember Sir Marmaduke has a very big stake on the result. You're going to ride on one I've tried as high as ever I did try one, and I believe she's a thorough stayer besides. I want you to get well off, and take a good place from the beginning, and keep it. Half-way up the distance come right away, don't ride her head off, but don't let any of the old hands near you at the finish. It's no use fighting a race out with them before you're obliged. Some of the layers will wear wry faces to-morrow when they see you up. They've all heard of Blackton's accident, and fancy we're fairly heaped for some one to ride."

"All right, Mr. Pipes," replied Forrest, "there's no fear of my forgetting those orders, and don't be afraid of my attempting a fine finish unless I'm compelled."

"He's grit, and will do his best," muttered the trainer, as Jim took his departure; "but that ehap didn't begin in a stable, I'll take my oath."

There was considerable excitement when the saddling-bell rang next day for the July Stakes. Atalanta was a hotter favourite than ever, and Sir Marmaduke had completely cowed the Ring by accepting fifteen hundred to a thousand about her chance, and offering to *go on*. Most of the leading bookmakers closed their volumes as far as the filly was concerned, and declined even to make an offer against her. About who was to ride her there was also much curiosity and equal mystery. Those most closely connected with the stable said truthfully that they did not know, but that Sir Marmaduke declared it was all right, and she would win easily, and the baronet had endorsed this statement by his transactions in the betting-ring an hour ago. Up go the numbers, and then all the world knows that it is Jim Forrest who is going to ride Atalanta—a young joekey, it is true; still it is fresh in the memory of all racegoers that he won the Two Thousand on a very queer-tempered one, and fairly beat Blackton himself in a ding-dong struggle for third place at Epsom. Atalanta pleases marvellously all judges who go to see her saddled. She looks a galloper all over, and is obviously trained to the hour. Shorter and shorter grow the odds against her, till at last she is fairly established at evens against the field. The Newsmonger men rather lose heart, and cease supporting their horse in face of the way the money is literally poured down upon the Panton Lodge filly.

As he canter down to the post Jim discovers with much satisfaction that he has a much pleasanter mount than he had in the Two Thousand. Atalanta is a perfect lady as regards her manners, and behaves with the greatest propriety at the post. At the first attempt the flag falls to a capital start, and, the filly proving herself a good beginner, enables Jim to take a prominent place in the van. At the distance

the comfortable conviction begins to steal over him that he holds his field safe, but riding strictly to orders he comes clean away half-way up, and, although Newsmonger makes a gallant effort in Pycroft's practised hands to come away with him, he holds his own but for a few strides, and then drops back completely out-paced, leaving Atalanta to run home an easy winner by three lengths.

Backers are for the most part jubilant, but the Ring receive the hoisting of the filly's number with that moody silence wont to steal over them for the moment when heavily hit, and that Sir Marmaduke and his friends have taken a very large stake out of the fielders is well known. The Panton Lodge stable held it one of "the best things" they had had for many a day, and their chief and his followers were very dashing bettors at any time.

A queer look of dismay came over Elliston's face when he saw who was to ride Atalanta. He thought of what Pearson had said at the Spring Meeting. Was this boy destined to cross him at every turn, and avenge his father? He felt intuitively that he would win the Julys, although there was no great sagacity necessary to come to that conclusion; for, although unable all the morning to discover who was to ride Atalanta, he had learnt that she possessed the implicit confidence of the stable, that she was very good-tempered and tractable, and, in short, was an animal, to use the stereotyped phrase, that a child could ride. Elliston had seen quite enough already of Jim Forrest in the saddle not to doubt his ability to do justice to Sir Marmaduke's filly, and backed it also for a little at the last. It was not that he had had such a very bad race, but he is haunted with the superstition that the strange apparition of Gerald Rockingham on the racecourse is destined to work his destruction.

CHAPTER XXII.

“HOW VERY DISGRACEFUL!”

MISS ROCKINGHAM was sadly put out when she thought over her brother's relation with Dollie. For a gentleman in Gerald's position—she little guessed what it really was—to keep up such a farce as this flirtation with Bill Greyson's daughter was not only absurd, but in very bad taste to boot; besides, he might find himself in a very awkward scrape if he was not careful. Dollie no doubt was a designing minx, and, for the life of her, Ellen could never have been made to see that a penniless Rockingham, without a settled design for earning his own living, was no great catch after all for even a girl like Dollie. How was she to get hold of Gerald's address? It was high time somebody spoke seriously to him about the miserable entanglement. Ellen, despite that she thoroughly recognised the change their father's death and altered circumstances had wrought in Gerald, still could not quite resign the ascendancy of an elder sister. Two or three years' seniority at one time of life represent at least half-a-dozen between sister and brother, and the former is occasionally slow to understand the latter claiming independence. We have all experience of some relatives who steadfastly ignore that we have grown up, and pester us with unasked-for advice till their or our own course be run.

However, what Miss Rockingham might have to say to her brother necessarily remained for the present unsaid, though whether that is altogether to the benefit of the future recipient I am not clear. Sometimes, there is no doubt, the dose of good advice stored up for us evaporates; sometimes circumstances occur that point out the futility of administering it; but there are times when it takes a cumulative tendency, and then no power can prevent the possessor from favouring us with the result of such thoughtful interest on our behalf.

Ellen was crossing St. Helen's Square one morning, still pondering over what Gerald might be doing, and why he should make a mystery of his proceedings, when she ran across John Thorndyke.

"Good morning, Miss Roekingham! Have you seen what a wonderful house Mr. Grudson is building out towards Aeomb? You don't know him, I suppose?"

"Only by name. He is one of the new people about here, is he not? Made his money as a manufacturer, I think."

"Yes; but the family is well known round York, where they have been yeoman farmers for generations. This is the first of them who, conforming to the spirit of the age, has left the traditional groove, and made his fortune by so doing."

"I am rather conservative in my ideas, and prefer seeing people do their duty in that station of life to which Providence has called them," replied Ellen, coldly.

"You are putting a wrong interpretation on that sentence, and you know it," rejoined Thorndyke seriously. "The mass of mankind have to earn their bread; and, according to their capabilities, so does the choice rest with them how they will do it, and, providing they conscientiously do their best in the path they have chosen, so are they doing their duty."

"You misunderstand me, Mr. Thorndyke," said Ellen, in some confusion at the rebuke she felt she had well merited. "I only meant that I am opposed to what is termed in these days the fusion of classes."

"Ah! it's useless swimming against the stream. All that rigid demarcation of classes is a thing of the past; clean gone, Miss Roekingham. Dukes put their sons into trade in these times, and cotton-spinners wed with the Peerage; while—strangest caprice of all—I see by the papers that a young fellow of good family is actually getting his living at Newmarket as a jockey."

"How very disgraceful!" said Ellen.

“Well, I don’t know; I presume he found he had it to get, and perhaps it was the work he was best fitted for. Any way, you will admit it to be more honourable than living on his friends.”

“Yes; but it’s shocking to think of a gentleman in such a menial situation.”

“I don’t go racing now,” rejoined Thorndyke; “but, from all I hear, jockeys don’t view themselves at all in that light. The present generation of racing-men have utterly spoilt them by treating them almost as equals; their heads have been turned; and a more arrogant set of little monkeys, I am told, don’t exist. Still, Miss Rockingham, *à propos* to the newspaper *canard*, which is probably mere gossip, with no basis of truth in it; when a man—especially a gentleman—is suddenly called on from circumstances to get his own bread and cheese, it isn’t, believe me, a matter of choice. For the most part he has to take such work as falls to his hand, and that he feels competent to cope with.”

“Yes; and it is that which makes us so uneasy about my brother. That we are a ruined family you must, of course, have heard. We’re too well known in the East Riding for our troubles not to be county talk, and I may confess to you as a friend, if you will allow me to call you so—thanks, Mr. Thorndyke, but I don’t require protestations,” interrupted Ellen, as the rector was about to make vigorous protest of his assenting—“that we can neither make out what Gerald is doing nor where he is.”

“It is almost superfluous to say, Miss Rockingham, that I would help you if I could; but, further than the fact that you do possess a younger brother, I know nothing.”

“Not likely you would,” replied Ellen, with a faint smile; “not likely you will; but, should accident throw any information in your way concerning him, please don’t forget how anxious I am to learn something about him. His not writing is so inexplicable.”

"You may depend upon me, Miss Rockingham," said John Thorndyke, as he raised his hat.

Sometimes Ellen wished she could see Dollie again. It was possible if they met, she thought, that the girl might take a less defiant attitude, although the termination of their last interview left little hope that such would be the case. Still Ellen felt that she had one opening which would enable her to recur to the subject. She could always inquire if Dollie had got Gerald's permission to divulge his address, as it was still required by his lawyers. This trainer's daughter, who quoted Tennyson, who claimed to be on an equality with herself, and who, she had no doubt, actually considered herself engaged to Gerald, was a phenomenon that Ellen could not understand. Mrs. Rockingham was getting more reconciled to her modest lodgings now, not but what she had borne her reverses courageously from the first. Still it is a great trial for a woman who has been all her life mistress of a large establishment to come down to four or five rooms and her maid. She must necessarily miss the gardens, the flowers, the carriages, and all the superfluities which long habit has made part and parcel of her existence. We can do without these things, but once accustomed to them we miss them sorely if misfortune compels us to give them up. Do you remember what Sam Slick said about selling his clocks? "It's soft sawder gets 'em into the house, and human nature keeps 'em there." His plan was to persuade the housewives just to allow him to leave one of his clocks with them till he came round again, as a convenience to himself—he having too many with him. By the time he came their way again they had got used to the comfort of a clock on the mantelpiece, and bought it sooner than lose it.

Society, too, in York—and there is usually some pleasant society in a cathedral town—was excessively civil to the Rockinghams. They were well known and much sympathised with in their fallen fortunes, and, though there could

be no doubt that the late Squire had wrought his own ruin by his carelessness and extravagance, yet he had been always a popular man, and it was widely whispered that his weaknesses had been taken much advantage of both by his cousin and his solicitor. Then the mysterious disappearance of Gerald was another reason why people should make much of Mrs. Rockingham and her daughter, for, of course, it had leaked out that he had left Cambridge, and that neither his mother nor sister knew where he was. Society jumping to a conclusion after the hasty and airy manner in which society usually elucidates any little problem of this nature, that is to say, without any positive knowledge of the premises, deduces that Gerald Rockingham has behaved disgracefully, that he has abandoned those it was his bounden duty to protect, and probably taken to dissolute courses. Society, as a whole, sweetly ignores that a University career is not to be achieved without money, or that if we have to earn our living in humble fashion it adds bitterness to the bread of adversity to earn it where we have previously figured as one of the privileged who “toil not neither do they spin.” The consequence of all this was that Mrs. Rockingham and Ellen in a quiet way went out a good deal; the widow being urged thereto in the first place principally by her daughter, who thought rightly that nothing could be worse for her than that she should brood too much upon the past. All this had, of course, been very gradual, and it was only during the last two months or so that Mrs. Rockingham had been induced to emerge from her seclusion.

Mr. Durnford had done what a clever, well-to-do man of the world was sure to do, and become a leading star in the new social sphere upon which he had entered. As before said, the new canon’s little dinners soon began to be talked about. When a man is not only a *gourmet* and a brilliant talker, but understands the mixing of his guests as thoroughly as the mixing of his salads, his feasts imprint themselves on men’s minds. In this world of dreary and

indifferent dinners it is something to look back upon those in which both our intellects and senses were gratified. Men have obtained celebrity for conferring much more dubious benefit on their fellow-creatures; but Mr. Durnford was thoroughly appreciated by those whom he honoured with his intimacy. He had taken a great fancy both to John Thorndyke and Ellen Rockingham, and they were frequently of the canon's weekly dinner-party; and so it was that they had come to see a good deal of each other of late.

That Mr. Thorndyke, with his advanced liberal views, should occasion Miss Rockingham considerable astonishment was natural. She could hardly, swathed in her narrow sectarian ideas, understand a clergyman having such opinions; but what surprised her more than anything was that a man like Mr. Durnford, a canon of York minster, and a supposed decidedly High Churchman, should agree with the Radical rector of St. Olave's. Still, she could not resist admiring Thorndyke for the consistency and audacity of his freely-expressed convictions; and that they should be to a considerable extent endorsed by Mr. Durnford gave them additional weight with her. This morning she had advanced a step further and given him her confidence also.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN UGLY WARNING.

CUTHBERT ELLISTON has returned from Newmarket by no means the better either in temper or pocket for the excursion. The successes of last year so far show no signs of being repeated, and, although there is plenty of time yet before the termination of the year's racing for fortune to turn, Elliston feels unaccountably nervous and uneasy about the future. He cannot divest himself of the idea that Gerald is destined to work his ruin. He has been perilously near

that consummation upon more than one occasion, and looked it unflinchingly in the face, extricating himself from his difficulties by some not very scrupulous piece of audacity; but, like all gamblers, he was superstitious. All racing-men know what it is to "striko a streak of bad luck." Now there are times when it seems impossible for them to win, do what they may; and they are all prone to account for it by some adverse influence. One well-known owner of an extensive training-establishment I romember, who firmly believed there would be no luck attend his jacket if the silk was not of the exact hue. A shade too dark, or too light, he believed to be fatal; and the material was invariably procured from a particular shop in Paris.

We all know how a jockey loves, if possible, in a big race to don an old jacket for luck—to wear at Epsom the garment in which he has already snatched the blue ribbon for his employer. Cuthbert Elliston could not shake off the feeling that Gerald in the saddle meant disaster to him—Elliston. His letters lie by his plate unopened, and his tea is still untouched, as he moodily turns over the pages of a small morocco-bound volume which contains the records of the past week's transactions. Does the Recording Angel keep a grimmer ledger than those dainty little books present at times for some of us?—I trow not.

"Yes, I've a good bit of money to find for this afternoon," he muttered, "and I ought to have been a winner, too; but my luck's clean out. They always run good seconds when I back them; whenever I see that young whelp's black face I know I shan't do right. Who the devil could have thought when I hurled that taunt at him at Cranley, and recommended him to turn pad-groom or gamekeeper, that he would take to race-riding for his living, and that Bill Greyson, of all men, should be the one to give him his first mount, and that it should be on a horse of mine. Now for these," and he turned to his letters. "Hum! 'In great want of money—begs to forward his Michaelmas account;,' as if

there ever was any one who wasn't in great want of money. 'Will I put young Rattleton up for the Pantheon?' Well, I suppose I must. It won't matter; supercilious young beast! I'll take very good care he don't get in. 'Pibroch is galloping great guns; keep your eye on him at Goodwood. They mean business with him in one of the handicaps.—Yours truly, Joe Stubbs.' He's a sharp fellow in his vocation, Stubbs, and his hint's worth attending to. I suppose my cursed cousin will have the mount. Ah! what the deuce can this blue envelope, addressed in such formal handwriting, mean? Looks rather like a lawyer's letter; post-mark, York. It isn't Pearson's handwriting. I mistrust such documents;" and, as he spoke, he tore open the letter:—

"DEAR SIR,—

Parliament Street, York.

"As I am authorised by Gerald Rockingham to administer the estate of his father, the late Alister Rockingham, I must call your attention to sundry bills of yours, long since due, amounting, with interest thereon at five per cent., to an aggregate of 6,847*l*. I inclose particulars of the dates of the said bills, and their several amounts; and shall be glad of a remittance for their liquidation at your earliest convenience.

"I am, Sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"THEOPHILUS WRITSON."

Cuthbert Elliston gives vent to so savage an execration as he finishes this missive that his wife cannot help exclaiming, "You have bad news, Cuthbert!"

"Yes," he retorts roughly; "men don't invoke such blessings as I have just done over pleasant communications."

But Mrs. Elliston was too weather-wise to pursue the conversation. She knew her lord's face far too well. The glass had shown unmistakable signs of depression as he pondered over his betting-book, and had now dropped to "set stormy."

To carry on the metaphor, experience had taught Mrs. Elliston the wisdom of running before the gale; and, without further questioning, she quietly beat a retreat.

"I knew that boy was destined to be my evil star," muttered Elliston. "So, though he never alluded to them, Alister never destroyed those bills; and now they have fallen into Gerald's hands, who is not likely to imitate his father's forbearance. How they have mounted up to that infernal compound interest—trust a lawyer for having computed them at that—and some of them have been running a good bit now; almost past the statute of limitations," he continued with a cynical smile; "it may be quite. I don't know whether I can't dispute them. I must see Pearson about them. I don't pay close on 7,000*l.* if I can help it. They think I'm in funds now; that I had a good year last year. So I had; but it was a more up-and-down one than people fancied. If I won a good stake over Caterham for the Guineas I lost a raker over him for the Derby. The world always trumpets a man's winnings, and, as a rule, magnifies them; but, like himself, it is mute about his losings. It wasn't till Phaeton won the Leger I made a real haul; and this season has knocked a good deal of it down."

Elliston was so far right. A man's reverses on the turf are talked about in absurd disproportion to his winnings. *Apropos* of this, I knew a man who dated his ruin from landing 3,000*l.* over Gladiateur's Derby. "I got the credit of having won ten," he would murmur plaintively, "and every one I owed money to—and they were many—thought the time for cutting up the victim had arrived, and that he would never wax fatter. Telling them the real state of the case, and that I dropped two-thirds of it again, entirely *in their interests*, at Ascot, only occasioned derisive ineredulity, and they *went* for the carcase like the vultures of the East. They smashed me, and benefited themselves but little."

Elliston rapidly made up his mind that on the matter of those bills it was necessary that he should have his partner's

advice. Pearson had not directly benefited by them, though, as he had managed the raising money to meet them for the late Squire when they became due, it is quite possible that he had fairish pickings out of the transaction. Sam Pearson had seen more than one sporting spendthrift through his patrimony, and, whatever they might do, he apparently throve upon it. "Go to Pearson, he'll sec you through it, he never makes difficulties," was quite a stereotyped cry amongst the impecunious of Yorkshire, and it was quite true, as long as there was any security, Pearson would and did find the money at very short notice, but the victims themselves hardly liked to allude to the price they paid for it. "Going to Pearson!" was indeed usually the beginning of the end.

Elliston determined that he would run up to York. To-day he had to attend at Tattersall's, for he was a man who never employed commissioners, but did his own betting transactions, but to-morrow he would be off to consult Pearson. They could run over to Riddleton, too, have a look at the horses, and a talk with Bill Greyson. If these bills really had to be met it would be necessary to go for a *coup* at Goodwood. He telegraphed to Pearson to say he was leaving town by the midday train, and asking that worthy to give him bed and dinner. The lawyer was used to such sudden visits on the part of his partner, and was quite prepared to welcome him—had thought, indeed, that he would probably turn up that week if only to assist at the council of war which must be inevitably held concerning the great Sussex meeting. An you keep racehorses and gamble not for the prizes at Goodwood, what are you to play for? Newmarket, Epsom, Ascot, Goodwood, Doncaster, and York are the battle-fields of the big men, who leave the gate-money meetings and the provinces for the smaller fry.

"And now, Pearson, I have got a little matter of my own I want to consult you about," said Elliston, after discussing a quiet little dinner with his partner, and then he showed

him Mr. Writson's letter. "Now, these bills, you see, amount to a pretty stiff sum, and, legally, I presume, they can't recover on them. Alister, of course, met them when they became due, and that cancelled them."

"Yes; they were met, I remember perfectly well, and that Writson can't take proceedings against you on them he knows as well as I do. They resolve themselves simply into a debt due by you to Alister Rockingham; and these bills being found amongst his papers testify to its never having been paid. Morally, I suppose you ought to pay it to his creditors or his son, more especially as his family is left so poorly off. Legally, you are safe, but socially it might prove a formidable weapon in the hands of any one of sufficient status to use it effectively. This boy Gerald is too young and in no position to wield it, but if some of his father's old friends should take it up they might make things very unpleasant for you."

Cuthbert Elliston was quite aware that his present position in the world was much too shaky to bear being further compromised. Society is lenient in the extreme concerning turf tactics, will shut its eyes to much sharp practice in such matters, but Elliston had been mixed up in some two or three affairs that were voted too bad for even the easy turf morality of the present day. Old Lord Whitby, a staunch racing-man of the old school, had even gone so far on one occasion as to declare that "the fellow ought to be warned off the Heath, and that it was like his confounded impudence to show his face in the Royal Enclosure, under the very noses of the Jockey Club, after such a disgraceful fraud as that Calliope business."

Elliston knew that there had been much commiseration expressed for Alister Rockingham's sad ending, and that, had the world an inkling of how much he, Cuthbert, had had to do with it, public opinion would run high against him.

"Yes," he replied, at last, "I suppose they could, but I don't fancy Gerald is known to, or at all events remembered

by, any of them. They are not likely to discover him under his present *alias*, and the young beggar's pride will prevent him disclosing his real name."

"Don't deceive yourself," returned the attorney, quietly. "The leaking out that Jim Forrest and Gerald Rockingham are one is only a matter of time. All such things are. Suppose old Whitby took him up, and then came to know of those bills?"

"Confound it! I'm not in a position to stand another show-up, and old Whitby was more strong than polite in his expressed opinion about that Calliope business. Talked about a gentleman's obligations not being on the same level as a leg's, &c. Old fool! As if I kept horses for his gratification or the public's."

"Very good! I think you're right when you admit that the story of those bills is an ugly anecdote to have in circulation about one."

"Perhaps so," rejoined Elliston, irritably, "but I'm not going to pay close on seven thousand pounds for its suppression all the same."

"No. I don't propose you shall. You must put yourself in my hands, and see what sort of a compromise I can arrange with Writson. He knows very well he can hope for nothing more, and I daresay a couple of thousand would settle the thing comfortably."

"One is quite enough to pay for such waste paper as that," returned Elliston, sullenly.

Pearson looked at his partner with almost a contemptuous expression for a moment, and then said:

"Of course, you know best what your position is worth. What I, Sam Pearson, the racing money-lending attorney, do, matters little. The world regards me as a compound of leg and money-lender, but even I haven't got quite such an awkward story on record against me as yours. Never mind," he continued, rapidly, seeing Elliston was about to speak, "I'll drive the best bargain I can for you, and then

it will rest for yourself as to whether you take it or leave it. By the way, I'd not forget one thing, if I were you. Forrest, as he calls himself, is now engaged to Sir Mar-maduke, and he stands, rumour has it, pretty staunchly to his followers."

"Why, you don't mean to hint that he would take him up as Gerald Roekingham?" ejaculated Elliston. "He's no old friend of Alister's."

"No. But, from what I've seen of him, he's just the man to do it, and that he will find out who his jockey really is I regard as a certainty, sooner or later."

"Well, it's no use diseussing an unpleasant subject further," growled Elliston. "To-morrow we'll drive over to Riddleton, and hear what old Bill's got to say."

CHAPTER XXIV

LEASING A RACEHORSE.

"SHE'S a monstrous pretty girl, that daughter of Greyson's," remarked Elliston to his companion as they rattled along the road that led from the quiet little country station up to the farm-house that laid nestling among the fir-trees on the edge of the moor; "and as vain and pleased with flattery as any other of her sex, I take it."

"Yes; they're all much of a muchness in that way," replied Pearson. "She inherits her good looks from her mother; and Mrs. Greyson is insatiable as regards compliments on her personal appearance, you know well."

Elliston smiled. He had been a lady-killer in his day, and was by no means out of the hunt yet. A tall, fine looking man, even if the dark hair was shot with silver. Mrs. Greyson had always shown much gratification at the airy incense it amused the ex-guardsman to burn at her shrine; but whether she would appreciate his extending his admira-

tion to her daughter was very questionable. Coquettish mothers seldom admire that attribute in their daughters, and are apt to accuse them of it even when there is no cause.

"Muslin's dangerous about a racing-stable," continued the attorney, sententiously. "They wheedle information out of soft-hearted pumpkins out of sheer devilment, and then some limber-tongued scamp wheedles it out of them; the fat's in the fire, and we're all in 'the cart.' Not that Bill Greyson's likely to trust his womankind with much knowledge, however they may hunger to nibble at the tree."

Mr. Pearson's last speech was somewhat enigmatical, except in its conclusion, and in that the attorney was to some extent mistaken. The trainer was more open with his wife and daughter than Mr. Pearson supposed.

"No," replied Cuthbert; "but here we are, and there he is, all ready no doubt to unfold his budget.—How are you, Greyson? hope the nags look as fit as you do. As for you, Mrs. Greyson, you stopped Time's clock on the day I first saw you. How are you, Dollie? You grow prettier, child, every time I see you. What are the young fellows in York about," he continued, dropping his voice, "that they ever let you come back to Riddleton? Why, I dropped into your uncle's shop last night, on the chance of seeing you, expecting to find a knot of youngsters ruining themselves in gloves, for the sake of your *beaux yeux*."

"Ha!" laughed Dollie; "you see *he* doesn't happen to be in York just now; so I thought I might as well come home," and the girl gave a coquettish toss of her head that was promptly taken note of by Mrs. Greyson.

"Her mother's own daughter," thought Elliston.

"I hope he is thoroughly eligible," said Cuthbert, smiling; "or else, Dollie, I shall feel it my duty to forbid the banns."

"Why, what have you to do with it?" asked the girl, demurely.

"Everything! Haven't I been in love with you from your cradle? and you don't suppose I'll give you up if I don't approve? And I shall be hard to satisfy that any one is quite good enough for you."

"Ah! but that is a question that more nearly concerns me," returned Dollie; "and is a point on which I intend to judge for myself when the time comes;" and as she spoke she wondered what Mr. Elliston would say had he the slightest idea of her engagement to Gerald.

"You've come over to settle what I'd best take to Goodwood, I suppose," said the trainer. "I've eased Caterham in his work lately, so that he won't be at concert-pitch if you even decide to send him."

"I think he had better go," replied Elliston, meditatively. "We can't keep horses to look at; but we'll talk about that presently," and he glanced significantly towards Mrs. Greyson.

The trainer quietly telegraphed to his wife, who, murmuring something about seeing after the luncheon, left the room, accompanied by Dollie.

"Yes," chimed in Pearson; "a gallop at Goodwood will do the horse good, and we needn't back him, you know. How's the Dancing Master?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Elliston. "I little knew what a flyer I was giving you when I told you you should have him if he won the 'Guineas.' You will have a shy with him at Goodwood, I suppose?"

"No, sir," replied the trainer, quietly, "I think not. The colt never was better; but the fact is, gentlemen, I daren't show him. You know what he is. He ran away with the Two Thousand, and refused to try a yard at Epsom. He would probably do the latter again at Goodwood, and, as my object is to sell him, the less he is seen on a racecourse the better."

"Quite right!" grinned Elliston. "He is a sort that will break two or three owners before some one has the common

sense to shoot and bury him. Now to what we really are concerned about. Phaeton, I fancy, ought to have a chance in one of the big handicaps. It depends, of course, upon what they put him at; but his one performance was winning the Leger. He's all right, eh?"

"Yes," answered the trainer, slowly, "he's right enough; but a Leger's a Leger, and I don't think they are likely to give him a very 'gaudy chance.'"

"Phaeton is a horse," observed Elliston, sententiously, "that can carry weight well. And, like many another good horse, can do a big thing over a short distance. I want to win a good stake, and we shall not be able to get a long price about the horse if he should tickle the public fancy. My idea is that in this case he will not. They are pretty sure to think he has too much weight assigned him for one thing, and as a Leger winner consider staying his *forte* for another. They are not likely to back him over one of these short-distanced handicaps. We might pick up a lot of money with him over the Stewards' Cup if the handicapper should prove good-natured."

"Well, sir, that's all simple enough. The horse had better go to Goodwood, and whether he is worth backing or not we shall know when we see the weights."

"That's settled, then," said Pearson, "and, as for the young ones, they must, of course, go and do the best they can; but I'm afraid our two-year-olds this year might be briefly summed up as rubbish."

"There's a race in one or two of them," replied the trainer, "but they are not much good, and if they do win it will only be because the others are precious bad."

"You haven't had an offer then yet for the Dancing Master, eh?" inquired Pearson.

"No; I can't altogether say I have, sir. Bob Broughton's been a-nibbling at him, but, of course, that wouldn't be for himself, and who he's acting for I can't exactly make out, but I'm given to understand I shall hear more about it at

Goodwood; bound to, if it's a bid worth having," continued the trainer, with a quiet smile. "A young gentleman with a bran-new jaeket, and mad to see his colours first past the post at Doneaster, is the sort of customer I want! Lord, Mr. Elliston, what sums we have seen young gentlemen give for a horse to win a Derby or Leger with!"

"He's not a horse I should care to buy, Greyson," said the attorney, "but I shall trust him with a little money if he runs for the St. Leger. It's the only way to deal with animals like that. Their preeious tempers insure their always being a longish price against them, and they seldom go siek or sorry, and one never can tell they may not take it into their heads to run clean away with a race."

"Backing the zero at roulette I know has a fascination for some people, but I should have thought, Sam, it was a weakness that you, at all events, had got over. Greyson's a better judge, and knows he can't be out of the Dancing Master too soon. Now give us some lunch and a glass of dry sherry in which to drink good luck to ourselves all round at Goodwood, and then I must be off. I want to get back to town to-night."

Always a sanguine man in his racing speculations, Elliston had never been gayer than he was over that lunch. He had that unaccountable, unnatural hilarity which our Scotch neighbours call "fey," which is always held a presage of some great disaster—a deeorous edition of the Feast of Bel shazzar, and on which the writing on the wall is illegible, as it was ages ago to the Eastern potentate. He complimented Mrs. Greyson, joked Dollie about what he considered that mythieal York lover, promised her a braecelet if Phaeton won the Stewards' Cup, smaeked his lips over a glass of curaçoa, and then, lighting one of Bill Greyson's best Cabanas, with an airy wave of his hand to his wife and daughter, sped southward to the lists on the Sussex downs as blithely as Ivanhoe to those of Ashby.

The last days of July are come, the sweets and bitters of

the season have been drained to the dregs. Unwilling milliners have been coaxed into throwing yet more bread upon the waters, and furnish unmarried beauty with armour for a final appearance in the *mêlée*. That gallant and light-hearted band of society's darlings who think that their bills at Mitchell's, dinners at Long's, accounts for broughams, gloves, bouquets, and every other of the *menus plaisirs* that it is possible to have "put down," are to be settled by successful racing speculation, have "pulled themselves together" for the Sussex fortnight. "Just clear the slate off a bit, old chappie, and then we can go and shoot grouse with a clear conscience." They don't do it, but how delicious that spring-time of youth is when it all looks feasible! Later on we know what playing for the last stake means, and can see the fatal deuce-ace, "the dog's throw," before the dice have left the box.

Two notable things characterised the turf-market at the opening of the Goodwood meeting. One was a strong disposition to back the Daneing Master for the Leger, emanating, the Ring declared, from nobody knew who—certainly not from the stable, as those connected with the horse simply derided the idea of supporting him. Bill Broughton, certainly, seemed to think it worth his while to take a thousand to eighty occasionally, but Bob was known to be a speculative backer at times, as well as bookmaker, to say nothing of having countless commissions on hand.

Another thing was that the gambling on the Stewards' Cup promised to surpass all precedent. Sir Marmaduke and his followers kept on backing Pibroch as if his defeat was impossible, and all racing-men concurred that he was very favourably weighted, but still many thought that the race was by no means a gift to him. Several other horses were strongly fancied by their respective partisans, and, amongst others, the small coterie usually associated with Bill Greyson's "good things" were very pronounced in their support of Phaeton. Still there was nobody who bet on

the large scale of Sir Marmaduke and his immediate followers; and old racing-men stood aghast at the way the baronet would fill up three or four pages of his betting-book in as many minutes when he really was sweet upon his chance.

With regard to the first of these mild mystifications, the following record of a conversation that took place between Sir Marmaduke and old Bill Greyson, in a pretty little cottage at Singleton, a hamlet about a mile from the Grand Stand, may afford some explanation:—

“Broughton tells me you want to see me, Sir Marmaduke,” said the trainer, as he entered the quiet little dining-room in which it was evident the baronet had eaten a solitary dinner.

“Sit down, Mr. Greyson,” he began with. “Yes, I do want to see you,” he continued, as the trainer complied. “Broughton tells me the Daneing Master is for sale, at a price. Can you warrant him sound?”

“I never warrant a horse, Sir Marmaduke; but he is sound in wind and limb, and any veterinary surgeon you choose to name is welcome to look him over.”

The baronet lit a fresh cigarette, and then said carelessly, “What do you want for him?”

“Ten thousand,” rejoined the trainer, gravely.

“I should doubt your getting that,” rejoined Sir Marmaduke; “at all events it’s beyond my mark.”

“And yet rumour says you gave that sum for Bushranger, who didn’t win the Two Thousand, while my horse did,” observed Greyson.

“Which only shows I paid too much for Bushranger,” replied the baronet, by no means to be thrown off his *sang-froid* even by so old a hand as the Riddleton trainer. “I am anxious to avoid a repetition of that mistake. Now your horse has a temper unmistakably, and that knocks money off him. Never mind fencing; in one word, what’s the lowest will buy him?”

Bill Greyson looked at the baronet with no little inward astonishment; the *insouciant* young gentleman was outside his experience. Most of the neophytes with whom he had had to deal were enthusiastic, sanguine, and utterly blind to the spots in the sun of their desires.

"Yes, Sir Marmaduke," he said at last; "he has a temper, and, if it wasn't for that, I wouldn't 'bate a pound, as I honestly believe him to be the best three-year-old I ever trained. One word, as you say, and have done with it. He's yours for nine thousand; and that's the last I have to say about it."

"Won't suit, Greyson," replied the baronet, promptly, as he lit another cigarette; "wait a moment while I think it out, and I'll tell you what will." A pause of two or three minutes, and then he continued, "I won't buy; but I tell you what I'll do. I'll lease the Dancing Master for the remainder of this year and the next; the horse to revert to you again then. Terms, five thousand pounds, and half of every stake he wins. He will be a rare good horse to you under those conditions if he takes it into his head to run honest; and quite bad enough one to me if he don't."

"It's a bargain, Sir Marmaduke," replied Greyson; "and a liberal one on your side I'm bound to confess. I'll send for the horse at once, and hand him over to Pipes."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," replied Sir Marmaduke; "that's by no means part of my scheme. I want him to remain under your charge; and no one to know that the horse has changed hands. You understand?"

"I think so," replied the trainer. "You can make more money out of him, Sir Marmaduke, if he is not known to be yours. He's to do his best for the Leger, of course?"

"The best we can make him. You can have a little of my book if you take further interest in him. Forrest, the boy who rode him in the Two Thousand, as you know, I have now first call of. I shall give him the mount at Doncaster; the colt seems to run better in his hands than any one's."

"It's awkward, Sir Marmaduke; but my employers insist that Jim Forrest does no more riding for Riddleton, and I've my own reasons for not wishing him about my place myself."

"Odd, that!" replied the baronet; "I should have thought he did you all a good turn at Newmarket—and he can ride, mind you. Now, Greyson," he said, rather sharply, "if our bargain holds good, who I put up is nothing to you or your employers. He rides my horse, which you train, and he need never come near Riddleton."

The trainer thought for a moment, and then said, "You're right, Sir Marmaduke, he's my horse even if you cry off your bargain, and I've a right to give the mount on him for the Leger to whom I like. All right! I'll do my very best to send him to Doncaster fit. In whose hands you put him for the race will be, of course, no affair of mine, but Forrest knows him, and from what I hear and have seen he's quite good enough."

"All right!" replied the baronet. "Remember the Daneing Master's not wanted till the Leger, and I shall conclude he's going on perfectly well unless I hear from you to the contrary. As for the money, just send me a memorandum of where you want it paid."

"Thank you, Sir Marmaduke, and now I'll say good-night. I wish you all possible luck with Pibroch in the Stewards' Cup, but it's only fair to tell you we expect to beat you with Phaeton. We mean it, and ours is very well."

"Thanks, Greyson!" replied the baronet, dismissing the trainer with a friendly nod, and once more plunging into dissection of the forthcoming handicaps. If there was one horse in the race that figured in the betting he felt sure of beating it was the winner of last year's Leger, and yet Phaeton's trainer indubitably believed in him. Well, that might be, but he would stand by his own opinion. The great question was, how was he to make the best of his St. Leger hand. His own horse Pibroch he felt sure couldn't stay. From information he had received he doubted Comet's

standing a Leger preparation. He would make a book for the Dancing Master and commence operations to-morrow.

Never had Sir Marmaduke and the reckless spirits that followed his lead had a more roseate time than that Goodwood week. The cruel fortune that had stuck like a burr to Mr. Pipes's stable all through the spring seemed to have departed. Luck had turned at Ascot, and it now seemed as if they could do no wrong. Captain Farrington gravely affirmed that he was getting tired of winning—a very rash assertion to indulge in with Brighton and Lewes, with their wondrous facility for dissipating Goodwood gains, yet to come. The Stewards' Cup had confirmed Sir Marmaduke's judgment, resulting in a tremendous finish between Phaeton and Pibroch, who came clean away from their field, and in which, after a ding-dong struggle, Jim Forrest just contrived to squeeze the baronet's horse home by a head. This brilliant piece of riding at once established him in the front rank of the profession, for he was pitted against no boy, but a skilled horseman, and it was generally conceded by all racegoers that the slightest error in judgment on Forrest's part would have caused the head to be given the other way.

Cuthbert Elliston cursed the Stewards' Cup and Jim Forrest with a vindictive earnestness that made his partner stare. Small chance now of redeeming those cancelled bills unless they were appraised at a very slender value, while his superstition about the bad luck Gerald's appearance heralded was more confirmed than ever.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAWYERS MEET.

"MR. PEARSON wants to see me? Tell him I shall be disengaged in a few minutes, Tomlinson," said Mr. Writson, as he contemplated his brother practitioner's card in his own

private sanetum in Parliament Street. "This must, of course, mean a move *in re* the estate of Alister Rockingham. Not likely Pearson is making any move on his own account; he knows that whatever pulls he had at the poor squire's feathers they were much too carefully masked for us to lay any hold of, but with Mr. Elliston it is different—we have record of his indebtedness," and Mr. Writson touched the bell as a signal that he was ready to receive his visitor.

"Good morning, Mr. Pearson," he said, courteously, as that gentleman entered the office; "I was sorry to see that the stable was somewhat out of luck at Goodwood."

Mr. Writson knew but little and cared less about turf matters, but there is neither man, woman, nor child in Yorkshire to whom "the talking horse" is not as natural as breathing, and the fortunes of the Riddleton stable were always the subject of common conversation in the city.

"Yes," replied Pearson; "when your expectations of winning a good stake are just upset by a head it's always disappointing. The calculation is shown right enough, but the element of luck incidental to racing has gone against you."

"Pray sit down; as you are aware, I am but a poor judge of such things."

"And yet," said Pearson, as he complied with his brother professional's request, "you are acting for an old client of mine who ruined himself at the game. The poor Squire was much too impulsive to do any good on a racecourse."

"If he assisted other people to anything like the extent he assisted his cousin, it would not need the addition of a taste for the turf to account for his difficulties," replied Mr. Writson, drily.

"Ah, yes! I have come round to speak to you on the part of Mr. Elliston," replied Pearson.

"I hope you are empowered to pay the money he is indebted to the late Squire, or, at all events, a considerable instalment of it."

"You see that is what it amounts to. It is only a debt."

"A debt for which I am instructed to press for payment. No one can know better than you how very little, after the creditors are satisfied, there will be left for the family. Such a sum as Mr. Elliston's unmet bills represent is far too considerable to be looked over."

Mr. Writson travelled a little without the record in this last speech, for, so far, he had received no instructions from Gerald, of whose whereabouts he was still in ignorance; but Pearson did not know that, although he thought it very probable that neither his solicitor nor his own people knew how Gerald was getting his living. Sam Pearson had been quite as anxious as his partner that the lad's connection with Riddleton should cease, but not quite from the same cause. In spite of a genial manner, Pearson would have never allowed his feelings to interfere with his interest; but he had compunctions about seeing the son of his old patron a servant in an establishment where the father had been emphatically master. With Elliston the case was different. He had always entertained a strong personal dislike to Gerald from a child; but for that boy he would have stood in the position of heir to Cranley, and on that dislike there was now grafted a superstitious feeling that Gerald represented his evil star. Thrice already he considered had "Jim Forrest" caused him to lose heavily, though there was nothing extraordinary in any one of the three races. In the Two Thousand a good but bad-tempered horse took it into his head to do his best ridden by the lad he was accustomed to. In the Julys the best horse won, as it was no secret all connected with the stable confidently expected it would; while in the Stewards' Cup Riddleton was just beat by a known good horse from Newmarket—the *ci-devant* Jim Forrest merely proving himself a fine horseman, which he had shown before.

"You see," said Pearson, after a long pause, during which he was turning over in his mind the lowest possible sum he could in common decency offer in composition, "Mr. Elliston is rather unfortunately placed just now for ready money.

If he had a good year last year, luck has run steadily against him this. It was a pity you did not apply to him before his Phaeton winnings had found their way back to the pockets of the Ring, whence they came."

"I should have thought he would have devoted some of them, at all events, to paying the son a portion of what he owed the father."

"Elliston, like a good many other people, has plenty of hungry creditors when he has money, and naturally pacifies those most likely to proceed to extremities. You should have made your application before this year's disasters."

"Nobody knows better than you," returned Mr. Writson, sharply, "that Gerald Rockingham only put his affairs into my hands this year—he has but recently found those bills. You, I dare say, knew of their existence."

"Whether I did or not has nothing to do with the question. You know you can't recover on them by law."

"Perhaps not. But I should think Mr. Elliston would not like to face the exposure consequent on our attempting to do so."

"Cuthbert Elliston would face a good deal sooner than pay a sum of money like that," returned Pearson, sententiously.

"You know very well his reputation at the present moment is by no means stainless—much too frail, I fancy, to stand a fresh scandal such as this would be."

"Pooh!" replied Pearson. "As long as you settle they'd be tolerably indifferent at Tattersall's or Newmarket as to where or how you got the money. A man who always pays when he loses possesses a cardinal virtue that justifies the infraction of every law in the Decalogue."

"But Mr. Elliston, remember, has a wife and a social position to maintain, and what may be overlooked on the turf may not be disregarded by society. His late cousin was a very popular man, and I know that about here there is deep sympathy felt for his widow and children."

"From that point of view I grant you it might be worth

my client's while to pay something. As for his paying the whole, it is no use talking about it—he couldn't if he would."

There was silence between the two men. Each was waiting for the other to make the next move. Mr. Writson broke it at last.

"What do you propose to do? You came here to make a proposition of some sort on Mr. Elliston's part, I presume?"

"Well; I suppose the thing really lies in a nutshell," said Pearson. "You can't expect Elliston to pay all, and know that you can't legally exact it. You have only one way out of it, and that is a composition. It's a mere question of what you'll take to cry quits."

"What has Mr. Elliston empowered you to offer?" inquired Mr. Writson.

"I am not precisely empowered to make you a definite offer," returned Pearson; "but, from what my client said, I think he would go as far as a thousand pounds."

"A thousand pounds in lieu of the six thousand odd which he really owes to Gerald Rockingham! Mr. Elliston is not very liberal in his ideas of settling with his creditors—about three-and-sixpence in the pound cannot be said to err in that direction. However, I must see what Mr. Gerald has to say to it."

A sudden thought flashed across Pearson. He looked his companion hard in the face, and then said:

"Are you quite sure that you know where Gerald Rockingham is? And what he is doing? I've a shrewd suspicion that neither you nor his family know where to communicate with him."

Mr. Writson had tolerable command of his features, but he was so taken aback by the guess of his quick-witted antagonist that he could not avoid betraying in his face the accuracy of it.

"Ha, I thought so!" exclaimed Pearson; "then let me tell you in the profession young Rockingham has embraced

he is very likely to want a thousand pounds at any moment. There's a leaven of the old squire in his composition, and I recollect hearing that he was 'blooded' over the Phaeton Leger."

"You surely can't mean that he has taken to racing? Why, you must be aware that he has no money for anything of that sort."

"There are many young gentlemen who don't seem to find that much of an obstacle in these days; but if Gerald Rockingham don't choose to tell you what he's doing it's no affair of mine. You will doubtless know all in good time, but a thousand pounds may be useful in any profession—in fact, I never knew a man who didn't want a thousand pounds. However, there's no more to be said now. You can send round to me when you have heard what Gerald Rockingham says to our offer. Good morning!" And with that Mr Pearson took his departure.

"Yes," muttered the wily lawyer, as he made his way to his own residence, "I think I may tell Elliston that he's not likely to be troubled for some little time. They would hardly move without young Rockingham's consent, and it's quite evident they don't know where he is, nor that he's blossomed into a celebrity. I can't help rather admiring the boy's pluck myself, and he *can* ride; but it will be rather a shock to his own people when they come to hear of it;" and Sam Pearson could not refrain from smiling as he thought of haughty Ellen Rockingham receiving the intelligence that her brother had turned jockey.

Mr. Writson remained wrapped in thought some little time after his visitor had left him. If Sam Pearson knew where Gerald was, it was probable there were others in York who possessed the same information, and yet it was very strange that he should keep his mother and sister in ignorance of his whereabouts. What was this calling he had turned his hand to? And what object could he have in making a mystery of it? Young men, far from making any

secret of their profession, are generally rather proud of having embarked on one. It is an unmistakable recognition of their manhood. Young, and with all its chances, whatever they may be, before them, it is but natural that they should be proud of the career which they have embraced. It is only later, when the prizes have been all missed, the chances all lost, and the profession of their adoption has turned out but a grudging stepmother to them, that they lose their love for it, that despondency comes over them, and they wish their line of life had been otherwise.

However, Mr. Writson reflected, if his client chose to keep his whereabouts a mystery, it was not for him to unravel it. He must surely see or hear from him ere long, and Cuthbert Elliston's offer was not a thing that pressed so much as two or three older matters. At all events, Mr. Writson reflected, he could proceed no further without Gerald's instructions. Even in arranging the sale of Cranley Chase, which the late Squire's liabilities rendered necessary, he was now much hampered by the absence of his principal. He had hoped, in the first instance, that the place, at all events, might have been saved, and that a heavy sacrifice of the outlying lands would have averted the sale of the house and park. But it was now evident that, even if it were possible—which was very doubtful—to retain these, the income left would be totally inadequate to keep up such a place as Cranley. It might be painful, but it was undoubtedly the wisest thing for the family to part with their broad manors altogether. Another thing rather troubled Mr. Writson. Although not as yet advertised, it had been privately put about that Cranley Chase was likely to be in the market, and so far, somewhat to Mr. Writson's dismay, they had not even had a nibble. The wealthy plutocrat who had made his money in some of our great manufacturing industries, and desired, after the way of his class, to become a large landed proprietor, had not appeared. Mr. Writson was already pondering somewhat sadly on whether

it would not be necessary to break the Rockingham property up and dispose of it in lots. Mr. Writson was solicitor to a large proportion of the country gentlemen round about York, and had much reverence for their stately homes. The lawyer was a staunch Conservative, and deplored the downfall of an old county family as an antiquary might the destruction of Roman remains. He had never been Alister Rockingham's man of business, but was unfeignedly sorry for the obliteration of the family from the roll of landed gentry of the county of York, and the saving of that seemed hopeless.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"I AM PERFECTLY SERIOUS."

MISS ROCKINGHAM, still much disturbed in her mind as to what had become of her brother, would have been no little astonished could she have looked into that sitting-room in Coney Street which was the scene of her skirmish with Dollie Greyson. That young lady was seated on the sofa, and in very close proximity to her was the missing Gerald.

"I am so pleased to see you again," said the girl; "and how well you have done, Gerald dear, during the short time you've been at it! Why, you're quite one of the cracks."

"Yes," he replied; "I get lots of riding now, and am already beginning to make money hand over hand. Getting a retainer from Sir Marmaduke in the first instance, and then Blackton's accident, were two rare turns for me. You saw, Dollie, I got all the first mounts from Pipes's stable, and, what's more, made no mess of them either."

"I should think not. Why, the papers all said that it was your riding got Pibroch home a winner in the Stewards' Cup."

"Yes; Sir Marmaduke and his friends were all very

complimentary, and substantially so, too, Dollie. That race was worth five hundred pounds to me. I have got money in the bank now, and hope to put by a good bit if I don't get too heavy. When did you leave Riddleton, and how did you leave them all?"

"I have been here about a week. They are all well, and take the greatest interest in your career. Joe Butters has a growing idea that he taught you to ride, and I heard father say to him the other day, 'He'd a rougher school-master than you, Joe; the Dancer, as they call him in the stable, made Jim Forrest.'"

"So he did. How is the queer-tempered brute, Dollie? He was backed for a deal of money for the Leger at Goodwood. I should like to be up on him at Doncaster, and see if he'd try with me once more."

"Ah, they won't let you ride for Riddleton again. Mr. Elliston and Mr. Pearson won't have it, and I don't think father quite wants you about the place, Gerald," replied the girl, shyly.

"But your father has no cause to be angry with me."

"No; but remember he does not know who you are, and dear father thinks I'm too good for any one almost. He watches your riding with great interest, and saw you win at Goodwood. He said when he came back, 'It was that Jim Forrest who was here bowled us over, and Mr. Elliston is a fool to bar his riding for Riddleton.'"

"Well, I shall go over and see him. We were very good friends when we met at Goodwood."

"Oh, yes, he would be glad to see you, and mother too. It's different from what it was when you were with us. Now you're a swell you know. But what are you going to do? You will go and see your mother and sister, I suppose?"

"Yes. Fancy Ellen coming to see you, as you told me in your letter! How did you get on?"

"Well, not particularly well. She wanted to patronise me, and I didn't like that; and then, Gerald, she derided the

idea of there being anything serious between us, and I liked that still less."

" But how did she come to know anything about it ? Did you tell her ?"

" She saw your ring on my finger, and I don't quite know how it was led up to, but she guessed you gave it me, and quite lectured me for being fool enough to believe that a Rockingham could intend to do more than amuse himself with a girl like me."

" Ellen's too bad, by Jove !" said Gerald, starting to his feet, and pacing the room in his annoyance. " She always was as proud as Lucifer, and now she ignores the fact that we are ruined. She secluded herself so latterly that she is quite ignorant of the way things are changing, and that the old families have to make way for the new. Upon my word I think she believes one can live on one's genealogy. However, she shall know that my intentions are serious enough, as far as you are concerned, before the day's over."

" What will your mother say to it ?"

" She won't like it, I daresay, at first, more especially as she won't know that but for you I should be sore puzzled to even earn my daily bread. I don't know what else I could have turned my hand to ; but I don't intend to tell her as yet what I am doing. When she knows she'll have to admit that a jockey, even if he is a Rockingham, is very suitably mated with Dollie Greyson, and a lucky fellow to have won her to boot."

" I do hope she will let me love her, Gerald, and that we shall get on together."

" No doubt of that. Ellen is different. There will be more trouble to reconcile her to our marriage, but she will come round when she knows that I am Jim Forrest, the jockey."

" You know best, Gerald, but would it not be wise to tell them that at once ? It is sure to come to their ears before long."

"No; and I'll tell you why. They both think there is a hope of saving Cranley—I mean just the house and so on—they know the bulk of the property must go, but hope that will be left to us. I can't tell for certain till I've seen Writson, but I don't suppose there's a chance myself. However, the knowledge that Cranley is irretrievably gone will make them understand that we must accept a lower position in the world."

"It will be a terrible blow for them to know that the old house and lands have passed away from the Rockinghams," murmured the girl, softly; "but I fear, Gerald, they will be more hurt at the calling you have adopted. I am almost sorry now I suggested it to you."

"Nonsense, Dollie! I don't know what I should have done if you hadn't. I should probably by this have been earning a wretched salary as a clerk; work I should have hated. My present work is healthy, exciting, and well paid; indeed I am rapidly making money, and I know nothing else at which I could have begun to do that so speedily. A big race taxes all one's resources of nerve, eye, head, and hand. It calls for resolution and ready decision, and the excitement of a close finish is thrilling. A popular actor obtains no prompter recognition than a popular jockey in his hour of triumph. The great thing is not to lose your head. It made my pulses tingle the other day to hear the roar of 'Pibroch wins!' 'Phaeton wins!' and know what a very fine point it was between us."

"Gerald, I must see you ride. I should so love to see you win a great race."

"All in good time. I must say good-bye to you now, darling, as I must have a talk with Writson, and then go and see my mother and Ellen, and next time you meet the latter she won't, at all events, tell you that my love-making all means nothing."

"But shall I see you again before you go?"

"Not unless I see you at Riddleton. I want to go over

there and have a palaver with your father. I want to know how the Dancer is, and who's going to ride him for the Leger. He treats me very differently now, Dollie, and may tell me. How he would jump down a *stable-boy's* throat who presumed to ask him such a question! I backed him for a little money at Goodwood for 'auld lang syne.' Once more, good-bye; I must get back to Newmarket as soon as I have finished my business in Yorkshire;" and, having snatched a kiss from Dollie's unresisting lips, Gerald took his departure, and made his way to Mr. Writson's.

The lawyer was unfeignedly glad to see him, although he had no very pleasant intelligence to impart, but he wanted authority for what he proposed doing. He told his client point-blank that any attempt to save Cranley would be useless.

"It will be that most miserable of all things—an attempt to live in a big house, Mr. Rockingham, on a very small income. Better let it go, hard as it must be for you to part with it. You will, of course, improve the income by its sale, and be spared a painful struggle, for I am sure it would pain you if Cranley were not kept up as you have always seen it done."

"Yes, better it should go than that," replied Gerald. "The gardens neglected, and the stables well nigh empty, would be sadder for us all than the loss of it. Besides, the first wrench is over. My mother *has* moved."

"There is one thing I fear you will be sorry to hear, that, though it is an open secret that the place will be in the market shortly, I have had no inquiries about it, and we may possibly have to break up the estate into lots, and dispose of it that way."

"I don't know that it makes much difference," replied Gerald, sadly; "more publicity given that way, of course; but every one knows we are broke, so what does it matter?"

Mr. Writson was more sincerely sorry for his client than any gentleman of his profession has any business to be.

"I have one other thing," he said at last, "to take your instructions about, Mr. Rockingham;" and then he told Gerald the story of the bills, and how there could be no doubt that Cuthbert Elliston had owed the late Squire over six thousand pounds at the time of his death, which was still, of course, due to the estate, and Mr. Writson proceeded to recount what steps he had taken to recover it, and in what wise they had been met.

Gerald's young face grew dark as he listened, and for some little time after the lawyer had finished he remained rapt in thought.

"Neither myself nor my mother ever liked or trusted Cuthbert Elliston. She always declared that he was a constant borrower and evil adviser, and that my father would have been a much richer man if he'd never seen him. Me he hated from a child. I, of course, came between him and the property. My birth extinguished his chance of ever coming into Cranley. I am not at all disposed to let Elliston off that money if it is possible to make him pay it."

"If you leave it to me I think we shall at all events get some of it, and you almost owe it to your mother and sister to try."

"All right! do as you think best. And now, I think, there's nothing more."

"No. Just give me your address, Mr. Rockingham, in case I want to write to you."

"I cannot do that as yet, but you will hear from me in a few weeks, perhaps see me again. Good-bye."

"Now what can be his objection to giving his address?" mused Mr. Writson. "Not a word either did he drop as to what he was doing. Pearson is evidently posted on both these points, and yet he keeps me, his solicitor, in ignorance. It's foolish. He's young or he would know the old axiom,

‘No secrets from your lawyer and doctor,’ is an excellent adage. Well, well, it’s hard, poor boy, at his age, that he should have necessity to confide in either.”

Gerald strode mournfully towards his mother’s lodgings in St. Leonard’s Place. He was by no means dissatisfied with his own personal prospects. He had dropped all rubbish about its being below his dignity. He had to earn his own living, and make money to boot if possible. That which came easiest to his purpose he had done, and was no whit ashamed of it. But he had now to break the fact, not only that Cranley Chase was gone from them for ever, to his mother and sister, but that it was his fixed determination to marry Dollie Greyson, the trainer’s daughter;—two things that were likely to be bitter news in St. Leonard’s Place. Especially would his sister Ellen resent what she would deem a terrible *mésalliance*. All this, and his resolute determination not to disclose his present vocation or address, would, he knew, make the interview painful.

His mother uttered a cry of delight as he entered the room. Not only, poor lady, was she honestly much pleased to see her son, but she further hoped that he was the herald of good tidings. She bore a brave front to the world and faced her altered fortunes with all the patient courage high-bred women usually display in such troubles, but there was under it all hope that enough might be saved from the wreck to enable her to end her days at Cranley.

Ellen had no such delusions, and saw clearly enough that to live at Cranley with an income quite insufficient to keep the place up would be infinitely more painful than their present position, to which she had tolerably reconciled herself. Although very pleased to see her brother, she greeted him with considerably less effusion than her mother. She had not forgiven his unaccountable silence, and, moreover, although she derided the idea of there being anything serious in it, she was aware that he was carrying on a desperate flirtation with Dollie Greyson. Miss Roekingham,

with her rather rigid principles, thought that not only bad style, but that it was decidedly wrong of Gerald to turn the girl's head in this fashion.

"Well, mother, I have seen Mr. Writson this morning, and it is quite decided. I know you will feel it, but the old house must go. Even if we could keep it we couldn't live in it, and wouldn't you rather it went from us altogether than merely went to rack and ruin in our hands?"

"You know best, Gerald. I should have dearly loved to finish my days where I have passed so many happy years; but if it must be so it is useless my saying any more. If I grieve over it you and Ellen, at least, shall not see it. But, my dear boy, why have we not heard from you for so long, and what are you doing?"

"Mother, you must rest content when I tell you that I am earning my own living honestly, and doing well. I am even putting by money, but I will not tell you how as yet."

Ellen stared in undisguised astonishment at her brother.

"You making money, Gerald! My dear brother, can it be really true? I am glad, very glad, for your own sake, and must confess to the greatest curiosity as to how you do it."

"It was unkind to keep such good news to yourself," exclaimed Mrs. Rockingham. "I have been so anxious about you."

"I had urgent reasons for not writing"—he could not well despatch letters from Riddleton—"but they are now in a great measure removed, and you will hear from me occasionally as well as see me. Before long I shall be able to explain everything, and you will find I have done nothing I need be ashamed of. One thing more, mother, dearest, I'm going to be married."

"Married, Gerald! At your age, and in your circumstances? It's madness!"

"Well, I ought not to have said that exactly, because I'm not going to be married just yet; but I am engaged to a Miss Greyson."

"Gerald! Gerald! Don't say that, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed his sister. "She's the niece of the haberdasher in Coney Street, mother."

"Never mind who she is. She's a very pretty, good girl, and has been brought up a lady, as Ellen there can testify, and I'm pledged to make her my wife. I know, mother, you won't relish the idea at first, but it's not going to take place at present, and in the meantime I want you to know Dollie."

"Gerald, I am afraid," returned Mrs. Rockingham, "that you are meditating a very foolish thing. If we have lost our house and lands, remember we are still Rockinghams."

"Ah, mother, dear, there's a new order of things rapidly approaching, and Rockinghams and other people of the same type will find they are of little account in the days that are coming unless they command either money or brains."

"Do you mean to say, Gerald, birth and blood are to be of no consideration in future?"

"Birth and blood will count for little, my sister. What you can do will be held in higher reverence than how you were born, very shortly—indeed, I might say is already. And now, dearest mother, I must say good-bye. My very brief holiday is over, and I must return again to my work, but you will hear from me before long."

"Oh, Gerald, this is a miserably short visit, and I had so much to say to you," murmured Mrs. Rockingham, as she embraced him tenderly.

"Work is work, mother, and must be seen to. There's no money to be made unless one sticks to it. Good-bye, Ellen."

But the girl was too anxious to part with him in that fashion. She accompanied him downstairs.

"It is not betting that you're making your money at?" she said in a nervous whisper, as she clung tightly to him at the door.

"No, no, darling! It is no chance work of that description. I legitimately earn what I make. Set your mind at rest on that point."

"And you don't really mean to marry Miss Greyson, do you, Gerald?"

"Most undoubtedly," he returned, brusquely. "I am perfectly serious. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ONCE MORE AT RIDDLETON.

GERALD could not help smiling at his dual identity as he jumped into the trap that was to convey him to Riddleton Moor. He had during that hurried visit to York been his own self, now he had become Jim Forrest again. He was like a young soldier returning from a successful campaign. He had left Riddleton a raw recruit, at the very bottom of the turf-ladder; he was returning decorated and known to fame. The stable-boy had blossomed into the coming jockey, who had held his own successfully with the best horsemen of the day. He was famous in his world, and knew that his old comrades would regard him with more respect as Jim Forrest, the artist who had picked the Stewards' Cup at Goodwood out of the fire, to say nothing of winning the Two Thousand and the Julys, than if he were of the best blood in Yorkshire and Master of the Buckhounds to boot.

Years ago, I remember, when I was a small boy at a private school, there came to visit us one who had gone from our ranks and attained the dignity of the Upper School at Rugby. He was neither clever nor had he distinguished himself in any way, but we all looked upon him with infinite awe and respect, to which he responded by treating us all with the most supercilious contempt, interspersed with sundry cuffs of our heads and tweaks to our small noses. I think we regarded him with greater awe than ever then. We did not understand in our juvenile ignorance what a contemptible

snob he really was. There was nothing of this sort about Gerald, and he shook hands with the lads 'midst whom his lot had been for a short time cast with the greatest cordiality. They were all proud of him in the stable. Jim Forrest had begun as a Riddleton lad, and it was open to any other Riddleton lad to attain equal eminence; and who can doubt there were several among them who deemed they were quite as fine horsemen as their fortunate comrade?

"Well, Jim, you've come on wonderful. I and the Dancer between us have mado you. What's the machine say? You're careful about your grub, I hope, and keep the setting-muzzle on mostly? Think of a career like yours being spoilt by mere greediness."

"I tell you what, Joe," returned Forrest, "you're not so abstemious yourself, you know. You don't practise what you preach."

"Bless you, don't take pattern by me, take warning. I'm incurably given to vicious courses, I am," said Butters, shaking his head. "In my perverted nature I never could be got to like toast, stale bread, gruel, and lots of walking."

"And the end of it is, Joe, you've never been given a chance in a big race."

"It ain't all vice," returned Butters, dolefully, "it's partly constitutional. Fat's unevenly dispersed in this world, that's what it is. Have you seen Mr. Greyson yet?"

"No. I want to have a bit of a talk with him, and I thought I'd like to see you all, and, as a matter of business brought me up this way, I came over."

"Well, we reckoned to see you on the Knavesmire, but not before. You'll, of course, be up for the races?"

"Yes, I suppose so. Ah, here comes Greyson."

Butters stared almost in awe at his audacious companion. The idea of any one at Riddleton speaking even of Mr. Greyson as Greyson was to him not to be "understanded."

The trainer shook hands heartily with his visitor.

"I'm glad to see you again, Forrest," he said. "You did

us credit at Goodwood, though it was hard you should just beat your old stable. Will you have a look at the horses before we peck a bit?"

"I should like to take a look round first, thank you, Mr. Greyson. Old Phaeton wasn't beat by want of condition. It was a very tight fit. I got just a shade the best of Brunton at the beginning of our set-to, and managed to hold it to the end."

"Yes," replied the trainer, "he was well enough. Pibroch was a little better than I thought him—that was all."

"I fancy your estimate of his form was about right, Mr. Greyson, but the distance suited him a bit better than either Newmarket or Epsom."

"Perhaps so. But here's an old friend of yours, Forrest," and, as he spoke, the trainer threw open the door of a loose-box, and the Dancing Master turned his neat, black-muzzled, grey head round to examine the intruders on his privacy.

"He looks well—uncommon well. May I strip him, Mr. Greyson?"

"Certainly. Here, Matthews, take his cloths off."

"No; I want to do that myself, as I have done scores of times when I was his boy. He was the making of me. I wonder what he'd have done in the Derby if you had allowed me to ride him?"

"Pretty much as he did do, I fancy," rejoined the trainer. "Mind what you're about, Forrest," he exclaimed, as the grey acknowledged his old jockey with one of those lightning one-legged kicks peculiar to thoroughbred horses. But Jim sprang on one side like a cat, and was at the horse's shoulder in an instant. "His temper I'm afraid will always go in a crowd. He'll never try in a big field——"

"Well," replied Forrest, as he threw the rugs on the straw, "he'll be in rare fettle at Doncaster. Riddleton ought to take the Leger again this year."

"All depends upon whether that beggar thinks so," rejoined Greyson. "He'll go, bar accidents. Never mind

about that," he continued. "Matthews will put his sheets on. Come and have some lunch."

As they walked down towards the house, Forrest remarked :

"Is it a secret, or have you not settled who is to ride the Dancer in the Leger? I put some of my Goodwood earnings on him for luck at that meeting, and am very curious to know who's to have the mount."

The trainer eyed his questioner keenly for some seconds, and then said :

"You must rest satisfied with the assurance that he will run, and have a good man up. How the horse is, you have seen for yourself. I suppose you'll ride one of Sir Marmaduke's?"

"I should hardly think so," returned Forrest. "I don't fancy he'll run more than one, and Blackton will be all right again by that time."

Again the trainer looked sharply into Jim's face, and this time came to the conclusion that Forrest had no suspicion of the bargain concluded between Sir Marmaduke and himself at Goodwood. Greyson had not much intercourse with the baronet as yet, but he did know that he enjoyed the reputation of being able on occasion to keep his own counsel, and if ever any one believed that much cackling was wont to result in addled eggs it was Bill Greyson. Silence is golden, especially in turf tactics, and tattlers rarely effect big *coups*. It was evident Sir Marmaduke had as yet kept his intentions pretty well to himself, though the trainer saw by the papers that there was always money being quietly trickled on the Dancing Master for the Leger whenever a decent price was offered.

"Well, here we are," said the trainer, as he opened the little gate and led the way across the grass-plot to the snug gabled porch, in which many a pipe had been smoked, and many an equine battle been fought over again by veterans who had borne their part in the veritable fray, the result of which was still matter of dispute as bitter as just before the

post was passed. The "what might have been" is always a fruitful, if profitless, subject of discussion; and the "what should have won" racing-men have always much to say about, to say nothing of that more extreme point of argument, to wit, what really did win. There are many turfites yet who witnessed the Derby of '69, who vow that Pero Gomez won; but, as his owner curtly remarked at the time, "The only man whose opinion is of the slightest consequence—Judge Clark—says I didn't."

"The missus will be right glad to see you, Forrest. Like the rest of us, she regards you at all events as a Riddleton-trained one that does us credit. Dollie's with her uncle in York;" and Greyson cast a quick glance at his guest to see whether he showed disappointment at the latter intelligence.

That Jim should listen quite unmoved was natural, considering that he was already quite aware of Miss Greyson's absence. To her mother this would have suggested an underhand correspondence; to the trainer it merely occurred that it was well he had nipped an idle and unsatisfactory flirtation in the bud, as Jim had apparently lost all thought of the object of his transient passion.

Mrs. Greyson welcomed Jim warmly—it might be almost said effusively, considering that the last time she had seen him her husband had with difficulty restrained her from sending Forrest away with what in homely language is denominated "a flea in his ear." Still, Jim Forrest the rising jockey was a very different person from Jim Forrest the stable-boy; although Mrs. Greyson, who, in her secret soul, was very proud of her daughter, much as she snubbed her, had very much higher views for her ultimate settlement in life. Mrs. Greyson was a vain woman, having, indeed, more than an ordinary share of that pardonable weakness of her sex, and she indulged in dreams at times of Dollie's marrying very much above her station. She aimed for her daughter, not at Jim Forrest, but the employers of Jim Forrest and his fellows. She was rather discontented with the gentlemen

who trained at Riddleton, and—only her husband stood no nonsense nor interference with his business—would have been always carping at him because he numbered, with exception of Cuthbert Elliston, none of the aristocracy amongst his clients. Elliston was by birth undoubtedly nearly connected with that class, and as such stood very high in Mrs. Greyson's estimation. She would have been astounded to learn that Mr. Elliston's paramount influence in the stable had prevented many of the best men on the turf from sending their horses to Riddleton. Gentlemen who wished to run their horses honestly were afraid to send them to an establishment in which Cuddie Elliston pulled the strings. It was through him that Bill Greyson had acquired such a shady reputation; it was through Elliston's incessant scheming and tortuous turf-tactics that Alister Rockingham and one or two more profitable employers had withdrawn from Riddleton. The trainer, though he had undoubtedly rather a tendency to crooked paths, was more sinned against than sinning; but he was to some extent in Pearson's hands, and so forced to do the bidding of the partners, and that was bad for his or any one else's reputation.

"You've become a successful man, Mr. Forrest," said Mrs. Greyson, as she extended her hand and begged him to sit down to luncheon. "You have got a grand start, and we shall hear of you quite at the top of the tree before long."

Jim pricked up his ears at hearing himself addressed as "Mr." Forrest. It was a recognition of his success that came home to him. Mrs. Greyson was not wont to address the stable-lads with any prefix of "Mr.," even if she managed to recollect their names, which was not always the case.

"And you've got Sir Marmaduke's riding, too; well, you are lucky. He's such a princely employer. I only wish we had got his training," and Mrs. Greyson shot a querulous look across at her husband, as if to say "You might have had it if you had exerted yourself."

The trainer vouchsafed no reply; but could not help reflecting with a dry chuckle that he happened to have a colt in training for Sir Marmaduke at that moment.

"Thank you, Mrs. Greyson," replied Forrest. "Getting Sir Marmaduke's riding is, of course, a bit of real good luck; but I'm only the second string after all."

"What does that matter? You'll get lots of other opportunities. They came to you before, and will again. We shall see you busy, no doubt, at York. That, as you know, is my great holiday in the year. William always takes a box for me there."

Now this was precisely what Forrest did not know. He had been to York races as a schoolboy, but it so happened not since he had known Dollie Greyson; however, at the moment he thought but little of the intelligence. He had further overlooked another thing, namely, that if he rode in his own part of the country his recognition was a certainty. He had, he thought, pursued his career quite unsuspected so far; but if he donned silk on the Knavesmire the identity of Jim Forrest with Gerald Rockingham was inevitable. This had as yet not occurred to him.

"Yes, Mrs. Greyson," he replied; "I'm pretty safe to be there, and I particularly hope I shall have a good mount or two. I should like Dollie to see me ride a winner."

The trainer and his wife exchanged a rapid glance at hearing Jim use their daughter's Christian name so glibly.

"I hoped you had forgotten all that nonsense, Forrest. You have other things to think of just now; time enough to talk about that three or four years hence if you are still in the same mind."

"I have neither forgotten it, nor do I intend to change my mind," rejoined Jim, quietly.

"You won't see Dollie at York, I doubt," said Mrs. Greyson, with just a tinge of tartness in her tone. She did not intend in the least to quarrel with a rising jockey, but

she at the same time did not intend he should marry her daughter. However, mothers are not always the arbiters of such things nowadays.

A little more desultory conversation, during which there was no further allusion to Dollie, and then Forrest announced he must be off.

The trainer ordered a trap out to take him to the station; and, as they shook hands, Forrest said, “ Well, I suppose we shall know at York who is to ride the Dancer ? ”

“ Yes,” replied Greyson; “ most likely What you all ride will, I dare say, be settled by that time. Good-bye.”

“ Old Bill can keep his mouth shut as well as any one I know,” muttered Jim, as the dog-cart whirled him down to the railway; “ but I should have liked to know who’ll have the mount on my old friend at Doncaster.”

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ YOU’LL BE WANTED AT DONCASTER.”

GERALD’S announcement of his intended marriage terribly disconcerted Mrs. Rockingham. She could not realise his marrying at all as yet, and comforted herself with the reflection that this was at worst a mere boyish flirtation, which could result in nothing, as such boyish flirtations usually did. But this was not the case with Ellen. In the first instance, she had thought just as her mother did; but she had recognised with astonishment the rapid development of her brother’s character, its increasing hardness, and fixity of purpose. Whatever his calling might be, it was evident that he was pursuing it with energy, and doing well, according to his own account: and then again she wondered what this mysterious vocation might be. Another thing, too: Miss

Rockingham had seen Dollic Greyson, and she was aware that her mother had no conception of what the girl was like. Mrs. Rockingham would see something very different from what she at present pictured, Ellen knew, whenever she came to meet Miss Greyson.

So the two women sat in the quiet York lodgings which they had at last learnt must represent their home for the future, and bewailed Gerald's wilfulness and folly in this matter; but with this difference, that, whereas the mother still had no real belief in his being in earnest, the daughter knew better, and felt that in two or three years it would be only Dollie herself who would prevent that marriage. It was a severe blow to Ellen; for, in spite of her strong religious proclivities, there was a large amount of "the pride that apes humility" in Miss Rockingham. She was a stickler for class, and intolerant of a church in which the pews were not reserved. She did not understand free sittings; she was very anxious to do her duty to her fellow-creatures, but not from the same level. Her good works were tinged with patronage, and, when her more lowly brothers and sisters winced, as people will, from that most galling infliction, she inwardly accused them of ingratitude. Not altogether a pleasant character, and yet Miss Rockingham was a handsome girl and a nice girl, who simply from want of an outlet to her feelings had contracted an unpleasant kink in her disposition.

But she was game as any of her race, and, though evil times had come upon them, was not going to lower her crest on that account. It was a sore trouble to her that Gerald should think of marrying so much beneath himself; and when she learns, as sooner or later she must, how he is getting his living, it will be a very bitter moment to her. To say nothing of what she would consider the disgrace of his present calling, Ellen has a great horror of the turf. She regards it as associated with gambling, falsehood, and much other wickedness; moreover, she has ever before her

eyes the ruin it has brought to her own home and family; and she would have told Gerald, and with reason, that the sea is as likely to give up its dead as the turf to restore the fortunes buried in its treacherous quicksands.

Yet Gerald, short as is the time he has followed his profession, has already some hundreds at his banker’s, and is rapidly extending his connection and business. Still, the more that riding falls to the lot of Jim Forrest, so do the rumours strengthen and increase that he is of gentle blood, “a scion of an old family that has gone to everlasting smash, you know,” murmured racing-men in club smoking-rooms. The sporting papers began to babble of “the aristocratic jockey”; but though, of course, Forrest was aware that he had received that nickname, he was far from knowing how very busy men’s tongues were about him.

Amongst a large section of the racing community there was no doubt now about Jim’s being well-born, and who he was formed constant subject of discussion. It was evident that a boy brought up in a public school, who had passed a term at Cambridge, and who had been well known as such a very “promising young one” with the York and Ainstey, must be recognised before long in a pursuit which brought him so much before men’s eyes as professional race-riding. But there are many people in this world, and shrewd people too, who, like the ostrich, think that if they bury their head in the sand they have swallowed fern-seed, and are consequently invisible. To bury your identity is a very difficult thing, but for one always before the public an impossibility.

The first person to thoroughly open Jim Forrest’s eyes to the fact that his secret would very speedily become general property was Captain Farrington, that good-natured reckless plunger, who followed Sir Marmaduke’s banner so staunchly. Jim had been riding one of the captain’s indifferent platers at Egham, in a race in which it was fondly hoped he had met half-a-dozen rather worse than himself, but the calculations of the stable were upset; for, in spite of strenuous

efforts on Forrest's part, he failed to get his horse nearer than second.

"You did your best, Jim," said the captain, with his usual pleasant smile; "but the brute's even worse than we thought him."

"Yes, sir," replied Forrest; "I should have thought he was good enough to win in this company. It will be difficult to place him anywhere where he can earn his keep."

"More difficult to place him than to place you, Jim," replied Farrington. "I'm not going to ask impertinent questions, but you're one of *us*. I've bet a level hundred you're clean bred, whenever we get at your pedigree."

"I am James Forrest, the jockey; where I come from, or of what stock, is, I think, of no consequence to my employers, so long as I do my best by them."

"Quite right, Jim. I told you I'd no wish to press the point," replied the good-natured plunger; "but I warn you it is a good deal talked about, and I should fancy you're safe to be spotted before long."

Forrest, on his way home to Newmarket, thought a good deal over what Captain Farrington had said. He knew the captain was a shrewd man of the world—whose judgment might be relied on in a matter of this kind, and, if he thought there was little doubt of some one shortly recognising him as Gerald Rockingham, Jim felt that it would be so. He did not want that, he persuaded himself at present, on account of the annoyance it would occasion his mother and sister, but in reality he shrank from its being proclaimed to the world that he was getting his living in a line not recognised as permissible for young men of gentle blood. He did not a bit mind the work, or being treated like any other of his fellows; he was only too thankful at having found a vocation so little distasteful by which he could not only get a living, but would have money to spare for those near and dear to him; but he infinitely preferred that it should be as "Jim Forrest."

However, he reflected, it would be time enough to worry about it when the thing came to pass, and at his age such Epicurean philosophy was, perhaps, as much as was to be expected.

The next morning Jim was up betimes and away to the Heath, to see what Sir Marmaduke’s string might be doing. He found Mr. Pipes very busy indeed with the horses, for Sir Marmaduke, who, since the termination of the Sussex fortnight, had been away in Scotland, resting on his Goodwood laurels, had announced his intention of being present at both York and Doncaster, and issued extensive orders with regard to the northern campaign. The principal interest of the trainer and his assistants seemed centred on Bushranger, the Leger crack. Blackton, now entirely recovered from his accident, was there to give him a gallop. The horse had done remarkably well since Epsom, and been kept and carefully prepared for the great Doncaster race; and all connected with him were very sanguine that he would turn the tables on Comet.

“Good morning, Forrest,” said Mr. Pipes; “you’re just in time to do us a turn. Go and get on Pibroch. I want you to bring Bushranger along the last mile. You can make it pretty warm for Blackton for that distance.”

The latter nodded good morning to Jim and then said, laughing, “Ah! you’ll not run away from me this morning as you did the first time we met. By-the-way, how’s that grey devil doing? Are you going to ride him at Doncaster?”

“I saw him the other day and he’s right enough, and meant for the Leger, but how he’ll run is a thing no man can hazard an opinion about. I never ride for Greyson’s stable now, and have no idea who is to have the mount.”

“A bookmaker’s friend,” retorted Blackton. “A sort that only wins when nobody’s backed him. If I can only get rid of Comet, I shan’t be afraid of him. I’d best be off, I suppose, Mr. Pipes? I suppose old King of the Mist will

lead me as usual, and Forrest pick me up with Pibroch at the end of a mile?"

The trainer nodded. "A good strong gallop, remember, but, of course, no racing. Still, you are to bustle Pibroch along towards the finish."

"All right," replied Jim, as he walked his horse leisurely after the other two, to await at the mile-post for their arrival.

It was but a few minutes before he saw King of the Mist leading the way at a good steady pace, and Jim just metttled up his horse. As they all but reached him, he jumped off with two or three lengths to the good, and improved the speed, quickening it gradually till they neared the place where Pipes was standing, when he still further increased it, finishing almost at racing-pace. Bushranger strode along in his track in grand fashion, and was, in racing parlance, always treading his heels off.

"Yes; we made a mistake with him in the Guineas," muttered the trainer confidentially to himself. "Bushranger stays much better than the other, to say nothing of his being a more improving one than Pibroch. He's a 7 lb. better colt than when he ran second for the Derby, and the extra distance at Doncaster will serve him better than the mile and a half at Epsom. He went well with you, Blackton?" he continued aloud.

"Never galloped stronger in his life; and, as for Pibroch, I fancy I could have smothered him any time in the last quarter of a mile, eh, Forrest?"

"I think Blackton's right, Mr. Pipes," replied Jim. "I believe he could have left me any time towards the end. There's no doubt about it, three-quarters of a mile suits Pibroch better than a whole one, and that's the extreme length of his tether. You'll not send him to Doncaster?"

"Yes; my orders are he is to go, but he's not going for the Leger if you mean that," returned the trainer.

"I ought to have a great 'look in' with Bushranger,"

chimed in Blackton, with just a shade of acidity in his tones, implying “You had better discuss these things with the leading jockey of the stable. Comet will have to be at his best to do me the next time.”

“We’ll hope he won’t be,” rejoined the trainer, tersely.

But there were plenty of keen eyes besides those of Mr. Pipes and his merry men who had watched Bushranger’s gallop, and, like him, deemed it so satisfactory, that the wires were in great request that morning; and, when the magnates of the Victoria Club got together, it was evident that there was more than one commission to back Sir Marmaduke’s crack for his Doncaster engagement in the market. That the credulous public should follow suit was matter of course; and at Tattersall’s, in the afternoon, it was an open question whether Bushranger or Comet was first favourite for the Leger. In reporting this fact next day, few of the leading sporting papers failed to remark, “that in spite of the strong demonstration in favour of Bushranger, reported to have done a splendid gallop that morning, there was a small coterie who apparently never tired of backing the Dancing Master at a certain price.”

“Oh, by the way, Forrest,” said the trainer, seizing an opportunity when Blackton was out of earshot, “you will be wanted at Doncaster.”

“I!” ejaculated Jim. “Why, Mr. Pipes, what is there for me to do?”

“You will find out when you get there. Anyway, those are Sir Marmaduke’s orders;” and, so saying, the trainer turned carelessly away, leaving Forrest to walk home and meditate what the deuce Sir Marmaduke could want with him at Doncaster, now Blackton was about again.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. DURNFORD'S LITTLE DINNER.

MR. DURNFORD was a man who understood the art of dining. He was fastidious in all his tastes, and in none more so than in the pleasures of the table. He had various crotchets and theories on the subject, declaring, for one thing, that the guests were matter of as much importance as the dishes. He had been known to reply to the remark, "Dull, but a doosid good dinner," with "Impossible; wholesome food well cooked, and you satisfied your appetite, no doubt, but pray don't think you had a good dinner. The mere fact that you found it dull proves the contrary."

Mr. Durnford held that, as well as tickling the palate, it was equally necessary to amuse the mind and gratify the eye. It was not essential that the guests should all be clever, but it was a *sine qua non* they should assimilate. Equally, the decorations of the table need not be expensive, but it was imperative they should be tasteful.

"Flowers, glass, and china are quite as pleasant to look upon as gold and silver, and can be had at small cost in these days," said Mr. Durnford. "It is as inexcusable to set your guests at a barely or vulgarly furnished board as it is to put before them a badly-considered *menu*."

The canon's little dinners had been famous in London, and their reputation had by no means diminished in York. John Thorndyke and Miss Rockingham were both special favourites of Mr. Durnford, and in consequence often met at his house; in fact, Ellen had come of late to seeing a good deal of Mr. Thorndyke, and was imperceptibly acquiring considerable admiration for his strong, straightforward, fearless character. He would have been a man of mark in whatever walk of life his destiny had thrown him, but Ellen often wondered what had led him to embark in a vocation which scarcely afforded scope for his energy and talents.

He did his duty honestly by his flock with all his heart and with all his soul. No one had ever heard John Thorndyke express the slightest wish that his lot in this world were different, and yet there were times when Miss Rockingham thought that for some reason or other he had stifled the hopes and aspirations of his youth, and taken his place in a profession not altogether of his own choosing.

The month of August afforded Mr. Durnford great scope for the exercise of that hospitality he so dearly loved. Lots of his old London acquaintances flocked through York at that time on their way to the moors, and were nothing loth to pull up for a night or two, break the journey, and have a gossip with a man sadly missed by the set he chiefly affected in the metropolis. The canon naturally asked his York friends to assist in making up dinners for these migratory intimates, which resulted in quite a series of little entertainments in Mr. Durnford's pleasant house in the Close. Then people who turned up for the races were only too glad to partake of the canon's well-iced wines and toothsome viands after the tumult of the Knavesmire, so that altogether Mr. Durnford's cook had a busy time of it during August.

The canon stands in his pretty drawing-room looking out upon the deanery-garden awaiting the arrival of his guests. He has, however, already one companion, who lounges in the easiest armchair caressing his heavy blonde moustache. It would seem at first somewhat incongruous that Mr. Durnford should number amongst his intimates Captain Farrington, but so it was. That nonchalant plunger in his hours of relaxation mixed freely in society; both he and the canon were above all essentially men of the world, and such assimilate easily. Farrington, apart from the one great business of his life—gambling on horse-races—was a popular fellow who knew everybody and everything that was going on in town. He had lots to say, and was an excellent *raconteur*, not given to talk stable, as is too often the case with racing-men, but putting off the shibboleth of the turf with his race-

glasses. Mr. Durnford liked him, and was only too delighted to stumble on him at luncheon in the York Club, and persuaded him to join his dinner-table.

"So you really must go on to-morrow, Farrington?" said the canon, turning round.

"Yes; after the London season a fellow wants a bit of picking-up. As an intimate friend of Marm. Martindale's, I had, of course, a good time at Goodwood; eschewed Brighton, and started for the north at once. There's nothing like three weeks amongst the heather to knock the smoke out of you."

"Then I suppose you will be back here for the races?"

Farrington nodded. "Yes; just been losing my money at Egham, and am going to give Scarborough a turn for a little; look in at Doncaster; and then work my way south again. Same old round, you know, London, Newmarket, and then comes the hunting."

"There is certainly a monotony about the way in which you sporting-men take your pleasure," laughed Mr. Durnford.

"No; there you mistake. Hunting, shooting, racing—all afford infinite variety; that's the charm. I know a racing-man who, at one time of his career, declared he was tired of winning. I fancy, poor fellow, he's rather tired now of doing the reverse."

Here the butler announced Mrs. and Miss Rockingham, who were speedily followed by the dean, with his wife and daughter, and these, with the addition of John Thorndyke, completed the party.

"I'll get you to face me, Thorndyke, please," said the canon, as they entered the dining-room. "and then, if you place the young ladies on either side of you, we shall all fall into our places."

"Glorious drowsy old city this of yours, Miss Rockingham! but I suppose that most of you are leaving now for the sea or country? In these days people are all gravitating

to the big towns; but Nature impels the denizens of the big cities to seek the salt-licks at this season."

"No; I don't think we shall leave York," replied Ellen.

"There are always people in the big cities who have to stick to them, even though 'Midsummer, with its army of banners, be advancing through the sky,'" said Thorndyke; who could make a pretty shrewd guess at what detained the Rockinghams in York.

"Beg pardon, of course, Mr. Thorndyke. I'm such an idle, do-nothing lot myself, that I sometimes forget the workers in the hive can't drift about as we drones do; but you have the pull of us. When you do get your holiday, you enjoy it. We sometimes don't. Not but what I get along very well with all my play-time."

"Yes; because I understand from Durnford you're a keen sportsman. You see, you're always doing something. It's the people who do nothing find life so dull,—those who have got the dry rot, as Dickens expresses it; who have neither energy to work nor to play."

"That is a thing that always astonishes Americans so much when they come to London and mix among our young men," said Mr. Durnford, "to find so many of them doing nothing. In their country every young fellow goes into business of some sort, however rich his father may be. I met a very shrewd, amusing New York man, last season, who said 'Yes, sir; I came very near getting myself disliked here at starting, from asking, in my ignorance, what their business might be of several young gentlemen; I found out at last they looked upon business as *infra dig.*'"

"Don't be personal, Durnford. 'Loafing around,' as our Yankee friend doubtless calls it, suits some of us best," retorted Captain Farrington. "Besides, we are rapidly becoming more American in that respect. Some of the sons of the nobility have taken to the City of late; and, as for the footlights, there seems to be quite a craze amongst both women and men to get in front of them."

"But surely it is looked upon as very derogatory for people of that class to embark in trade or theatrical speculation?" said Miss Rockingham.

"I think they might leave the Stock Exchange to those to the manner born," remarked the dean, sententiously. "Nothing is more likely to bring the hereditary chamber into disrepute than such vulgar dallying with commerce."

"The discovery that our nobility lacked the brain and energy to get their own living, if need be, would be infinitely more damaging to them as an order," said Thorndyke. "By-the-way, I read in the papers a short time ago that there was a young man of good family who was earning his living as a professional jockey. Is that the case, Captain Farrington?"

"Quite true, to the best of my belief. I know Jim Forrest well; indeed, he rides for me sometimes—and a very fine horseman he is. But you no sooner speak to him, than—though his manner is perfectly respectful—you feel that you are talking to a young gentleman of your own class."

"Does he admit at all that he is a gentleman?" inquired Ellen.

"Well, Miss Rockingham, I ventured to tax him with it once, but, I am fain to confess, he put me down thoroughly; while, at the same time, he convinced me that rumour was right in its surmise about him. 'My name,' he replied, 'is Jim Forrest; and, as long as I do my duty by them, I conceive my family is no concern of my employers.'"

"Yes; that sounds very like it," said Thorndyke. "The people are habitually diffuse on the subject of family. I speak as a man having much experience amongst them; and how often I have had to endure the story of the sister's sufferings, hear about the prosperous brother in Australia, who seems to have forgotten his own flesh and blood, or listen to the way aunt Maria left her money in the way she'd no call to, I really couldn't tell you. Miss Rockingham, too, could testify to their garrulity in that direction."

"Yes, indeed," replied Ellen, laughing. "I have heard it all too often. Do you suppose Forrest will continue to preserve his *incognito*, Captain Farrington?"

"Not a chance of it, I should think. So continually before the public as a crack jockey, the only wonder is that he has not been already recognised. It is already rumoured that he comes from up here somewhere. Either this or an adjoining county. His real name is sure to come out shortly."

"What a dreadful thing for his family!" said Ellen, softly.

John Thorndyke looked at her curiously; he remembered what she had told him about Gerald's mysterious disappearance, and how they were in complete ignorance of where he was, or what he was doing; and it flashed across him that possibly this Jim Forrest might be Miss Rockingham's brother. If so, how pained she would be by the discovery of the fact which he himself quite agreed with Farrington was inevitable.

"Don't know about that," said Farrington. "Heads of families are lucky if they don't hear any worse of their sons than can be said of Jim Forrest. I fancy there are a good many fathers who would be glad to hear their sons were making money instead of wasting it."

"And I suppose Forrest makes a good bit of money," remarked Thorndyke.

"Yes; a successful jockey in these days makes an income that most professional men would jump at; and, if he's only steady and keeps it, can put by a good bit every year. That's a very nice champagne, Durnford—not *too* dry, but letting you taste the flavour of the grape."

And then the conversation turned into another channel, and the history of Jim Forrest was no further discussed. Mr. Thorndyke walked home with the Rockinghams; and as, after bidding them good-night at their own door, he wended his way through the gorgeous summer night to his own

house, he pondered a good deal over the strange suspicion that had come into his head. He liked Ellen Rockingham; he disagreed with her on many points, but he recognised what a fine character hers was naturally, though, in his opinion, somewhat spoilt by class prejudices and mistaken training. If he was right in his conjecture, he felt that when the thing came to be publicly known it would be a severe blow to Ellen. Would it be kinder to break it gradually to her—to give her a hint of what he suspected? On the other hand, he might be all wrong in his guess, and then he would be making Miss Rockingham very unhappy for no purpose. Very much puzzled was John Thèrèndyke as to what he had best do under the circumstances. He, a man of decision, was undecided, and could see nothing for it but to await the upshot of events.

CHAPTER XXX.

GERALD DISCOVERS HIMSELF.

THE more Jim Forrest thought over it, the more he shrank from the idea that his actual name should be proclaimed to the world. He was quite aware that it would be bitter grief to his mother and sister that he should have descended so beneath the social position of the Rockinghams as to earn his living by professional race-riding, and yet what was he to do? It was all very well, but what was he to do? A man cannot live on his social position—social position, too, in danger of falling rapidly to pieces from lack of that very necessary aliment, pounds, shillings, and pence, wherewith to sustain it. He was making money rapidly in a profession in which he delighted, and yet he owned to himself that he *was* a little ashamed that it should be known to old friends and acquaintances how he earned his bread.

Snobbishness—rank snobbishness! But at twenty we turn up our noses at that which we are very thankful for at forty, disdaining a career in our hot youth which we see in middle-age with envious eyes successfully followed by others! Still, one could hardly expect Gerald to be stoical enough to take this latter view of the case.

Mr. Pipes had told him he would be wanted at Doncaster. He couldn't, for the life of him, say for what reason he had received these orders, as Blackton was now thoroughly well, and would naturally do all the leading riding of the stable; but one thing he was clear about—that there could be no hope of his passing unrecognised if he wore silk on the Town Moor. There would be far too many there who had seen Gerald Rockingham “go” with the York and Ainstey not to at once know that he and Jim Forrest were identical. He did not wish this, and made up his mind that he must forego both York and Doncaster. Foregoing York, he reflected ruefully, meant foregoing an afternoon with Dollic; but it was impossible that he could attend those meetings and decline such mounts as might be offered him, and he had promised his sweetheart that she should have the gratification of seeing him ride, and, he hoped, win. But he had quite overlooked the fact that there were plenty of other eyes would also see, and be quite as well aware as she who he really was.

The first thing he determined was to go and have a talk with Mr. Pipes. There was one little peculiarity about this arrangement. The trainer was invariably most affable and open—the last man apparently to have any secrets from his fellow-creatures. He usually agreed with all they said, and seemed to have no opinions of his own about anything. Men came away after having quite a long chat with Mr. Pipes, but, when they came to analyse the results of that gossip, they were fain to confess that they were no wiser than before they saw him. Even about the horses he had in his own care all they seemed to have learnt from him was

"that perhaps they might win, but then, on the other hand, perhaps they might not," and that was a conclusion possible for any one to arrive at without troubling Mr. Pipes, for it was odd, but the trainer, from long habit, had become excessively reticent and cautious in his admissions. Sir Marmaduke, who had a high opinion of him, was wont to say that when you could wring from Mr. Pipes that he rather fancied a horse's chance it was tantamount to being told you had a stone in hand. He erred undoubtedly on the side of caution, but was clever in his vocation, and enjoyed the implicit confidence of his employers.

Having found the trainer, Forrest at once asked whether, now Blackton was all right again, it would be necessary for him to go to the North.

"Such are Sir Marmaduke's orders," replied Mr. Pipes.

"But what can he want me for?" persisted Jim.

"That you will most likely learn when you get there. He's going to send a pretty big string, and I daresay there'll be riding for both you and Blackton. Anyway, Forrest, I have told you Sir Marmaduke's orders, and, as he pays you a retainer, I suppose you'll think fit to attend to them."

"Where is he?" inquired Jim. "Is there any chance of his being down here before York?"

"I don't know," replied Mr. Pipes. "He went yachting after Goodwood, and Captain Farrington went to Scotland to shoot, but I don't know where either of them are now; the last I heard of Sir Marmaduke he was at Cowes. He generally does have a look at the horses before a big meeting, but, of course, I don't know for certain."

There was a good deal of "He may and he mayn't" about Mr. Pipes's information.

But one day, about the middle of August, Jim Forrest was told that Sir Marmaduke had arrived at Newmarket, and would be out on the Heath the next morning. Jim went up, as he often did, to ride gallops or trials, or whatever there might be for him to do, and found the baronet

already there, and in close conference with Mr. Pipes. There are owners who leave the entire management of their studs to their trainers, very often not even knowing when or where their horses will run, but Sir Marmaduke was not one of these. He looked pretty closely into things himself, was a very fair judge of racing, and generally, after due discussion with Mr. Pipes, dictated what the plan of the campaign should be. This morning he was having a great parade of the whole team with a view to arranging which of them should be sent to fulfil their northern engagements.

The baronet nodded good-humouredly to Jim in return of his salutation, but it was not till the morning's work was over, and a lengthy conference with the trainer brought to a conclusion, that he afforded Forrest the slightest opportunity of speaking privately with him.

"Pipes told you that you would be wanted at Doncaster?" said the baronet, as he swung himself on to his hack, preparatory to riding home to breakfast.

"Yes, Sir Marmaduke," replied Jim; "but I am very anxious to speak to you about it."

"What is it? Walk your hack alongside mine, and tell me what is the matter?"

"I have strong reasons for not riding at Doncaster, and hope you will excuse me this time."

"My good fellow," said the baronet, "I pay you a pretty liberal retainer to ride for me whenever I want you, not to ride only when it suits your convenience."

"I know that, but I thought you could spare me this time, Sir Marmaduke. Blackton is all right again, and I presume will ride Bushranger in the Leger, and I thought——"

"Ah, Forrest, don't fall into that mistake. You're 'thinking' needn't begin till you're 'up.' You can think to some purpose then—witness the way you rode Pibroch at Goodwood—but previous to that leave all the 'thinking' to Pipes

and myself. I shall want you at Doncaster. Why you will know in due course."

"I am very sorry," returned Jim, quietly though firmly, "but I cannot ride there."

"I presume you know the consequences of refusing?"

"I shall have to 'scnd in my jacket,' I suppose."

The baronet nodded.

"You've been very kind to me, Sir Marmaduke, and I have to thank you very much for the opening that your riding afforded me, but circumstances forbid my going either to York or Doncaster."

"You must be aware, Forrest, that I can't be satisfied with such rubbish as that. Either give me a good reason for your refusal, or send in your jacket."

The baronet had for the moment forgotten all the rumours that were afloat as to Jim's social status.

"I'm afraid you would hardly call it a good reason, Sir Marmaduke, even if I told you," replied Forrest, regretfully. "I don't think it is myself, but I can't help it. I should give great pain to those very dear to me if I appeared as a professional jockey at either place."

"Then I suppose it is true what is said about you?" rejoined the baronet; "and that you really are a scion of a well-known Yorkshire family."

Jim hesitated for a moment and eyed Sir Marmaduke keenly.

"I don't know exactly what they do say about me," he replied at length. "I'm aware, of course, that I am called the 'Aristocratic Jock,' that my name is often put in inverted commas, &c., and Captain Farrington told me only the other day that it was useless to suppose that I could much longer conceal my identity. He was very kind, and didn't seek to pry into my secret."

"Neither do I, Forrest," interposed the baronet, hastily; "but, when I pay you an annual retainer for first call of

your services, I certainly expect to obtain them; and, when you decline to do what I have engaged you for, I am entitled to ask the reason."

"Quite so, Sir Marmaduke, and I will tell you my story at once. You knew my poor father, no doubt. I am the only son of Alister Rockingham."

"Good heavens!—you don't say so. What, the poor fellow who was broke over last year's Leger, and died shortly afterwards?"

"Yes," rejoined Jim, briefly.

"Knew him?" continued Sir Marmaduke; "of course I knew him. What racing-man didn't know cheery, genial Alister Rockingham, who bore his persistent bad luck with such unfailing patience and good temper? It was very hard his cousin, Mr. Elliston, neglected to give him a hint about Phaeton."

"Mr. Elliston had much more than that to answer for in bringing about my poor father's ruin," replied Jim. "Curious! my father was about the best friend Cuthbert Elliston had. He received nothing but kindness at his hands; and Cranley was his home whenever he chose to make it so; and yet he seems to hate us all—but more especially myself."

"I can understand his dislike to you," replied Sir Marmaduke, drily.

"Why? Except some boyish prank at his expense, I never did anything to incur his enmity; and yet his conduct to me at my father's death was simply brutal. He seemed pleased with our ruin; he jeered at me, and bade me go and get my living as a gamekeeper or pad-groom."

"By Jove! though," said the baronet, smiling; "did he? Well, you repaid that last taunt with a vengeance the day you got Pibroch home a head in front of his colt at Goodwood. He must have repented bitterly of his advice; for he lost a lot of money over that race, I know."

"Yes, it was nuts to me to find I had just done Phaeton, and hit my black-blooded cousin in his only vulnerable spot—the pocket. But why should Cuthbert detest me?"

"Why, my good fellow, you came between him and Cranley Chase. Till your birth he was heir-at-law."

"That never occurred to me, nor to any of us," rejoined Jim.

"Perhaps not; but, from my knowledge of Mr. Elliston, it was not a card in his game that he would omit counting. He sails pretty near the wind always, and is about as sharp a practitioner as there is on the turf. Now to return to the original question. What is your objection to riding at Doncaster?"

"If I ride there I shall be recognised; and, though I am not ashamed of the way I earn my bread, I don't want my people to hear of it as yet."

"I can understand that; but it's only putting the thing off. You can't expect to be prominently before the public and not be recognised."

"No; I am afraid not, Sir Marmaduke; still I wish my mother and sister to get rather more used to our altered circumstances before they know how I am getting my living."

"Getting your living!" replied the baronet, laughing. "Why, if you are only a little careful, you will soon be worth money, and make a deal more out of the turf than ever your poor father did."

"Yes," replied Jim, "it was a curious coincidence; but the first few sovereigns I ever won were over the very race that ruined, and I firmly believe killed, my father."

"Ah! Phaeton's Leger. Now for my scheme. Once more a glorious revenge for you! On the very scene of your father's ruin you shall win *this* year the Leger, the very race that broke your father *last*. Listen: I have leased the Dancing Master from old Greyson till the end of his four-year-old career. All that's to be got out of him will have been got by that, I fancy. I want you to ride him. He'll run with you, and apparently he won't with any one else."

"I am very, very sorry, Sir Marmaduke, but it can't be done. Ride in my own county just now I won't, for the reasons I have already given you."

"But I have backed this grey colt to win me a very large stake," said the baronet, sharply, "relying upon his doing his utmost in your hands. I regard him as the best of the year when he likes to try, but apparently he will only do that for you."

"I think you are right, Sir Marmaduke. I feel sure that he's the best colt of the year when it's his day. As for me! —Well, he ran kind with me at Newmarket, but I'd little to do with it, and nobody who rides him ever will."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this. I believe he is likely to run just as kind in Blackton's hands as mine if he will simply attend to the orders I got."

"And they were——?" asked Sir Marmaduke.

"Simply to get well off if I could, never fidget my horse, but leave it all to him. Greyson's words were, 'He can win if he chooses fast enough, but you can't make him!'"

"Well, Forrest, I suppose it must be so, though I own I had counted considerably on your riding him before I went into the speculation."

"I am very sorry myself, more especially as I backed the colt for a trifle at Goodwood, not having an idea he was virtually yours. I saw him the other day, and know he never was better in his life, and if I rode in the Leger at all would ask no better mount. I know it's a toss-up, but I know if he tries the Dancer will win easy."

"That's settled then. For the present, good morning, Mr. Rockingham."

"Good morning, and good luck, Sir Marmaduke. Am I to 'send in my jacket'?"

"That's a thing I'll think about," rejoined the baronet, as he struck spurs to his hack.

CHAPTER XXXI.

WAITING FOR "THE WIRE."

THERE was tremendous excitement at Doncaster on the Monday before the St. Leger when it oozed out that the Dancing Master was now the property of Sir Marmaduke, and would run in his colours. It further transpired that the horse had been quietly but persistently backed to win an enormous stake, and that the money had been dribbled on in the interest of the baronet and his friends. Bushranger also had arrived, looking excessively well, and evidently trained to the hour, and it was rumoured the Panton Lodge stable stood to win heavily on that horse. The public is much disturbed in its mind about which of Sir Marmaduke's pair to entrust with their money. Veteran turfites think it more prudent to back the pair coupled, while some good judges, remembering the Dancing Master's performance at Epsom, shake their heads and prophesy he won't be in the first three, and that if Sir Marmaduke is to win the Leger it will be by the aid of Bushranger.

The baronet has had a very good year upon the whole, and in racing parlance taken a deal of money out of the Ring. It is whispered about that if the Dancing Master wins that erratic body will be about broke, which, when Bill Greyson hears, causes him to shake his head and remark, "That's an ominous sign. My colt's fit to run for his life, but the man or the horse to break the Ring I've never seen in all my five-and-thirty years' experience, and don't expect to."

Jim Forrest down at Newmarket is anxiously awaiting the result of the struggle on the Town Moor. He is in a hurry to grow rich, and as we know he invested part of his Goodwood winnings on his old charge, and at a pretty remunerative price. He fidgets dreadfully. He wishes now he had not allowed his pride to stand in the way of his career, that he had gone to

Doncaster to ride the Dancing Master as Sir Marmaduke had required. "Utter snobbishness," he mutters to himself, "as if there was anything to be ashamed of. Not one of my father's old friends would think a bit the worse of me, and I should like to ride the winner of the Leger. I wonder whether he will do his best with Blackton?"

Jim is waiting with a little knot of lost spirits whose ill-luck compels them to attend to their vocations at Newmarket instead of being present at the great carnival of the North. They may be at Newmarket in the flesh, clustering like bees in the gateway of the Rutland, but in spirit they are all on the breezy Town Moor, absorbed in the struggle for the Leger.

Will the telegram never come? The big race was set for three, and it is half-past, and still no news. Why can't these Doncaster officials keep "Newmarket time," and have the horses in the hands of the starter to the minute? False starts! Yes, there may have been. There were sixteen that memorable year at Epsom when Macaroni did Lord Clifden a head, and Blue Mantle went to the top of the hill in thirteen of them, the race being run an hour late in consequence, and Blue Mantle's chance of a place comfortably extinguished.

Are we ever to hear — Ha! here comes the tissue! Open it, somebody, and shout it out.

FEDORA	.	.	.	.	.	1
COMET	.	.	.	.	.	2
BUSHRANGER	.	.	.	.	.	3

"Fedora!" murmur a score of voices. "The mare that was so badly beaten in both the Oaks in May and the Great Yorkshire Stakes last month! What was she quoted at?"

"I can't say at the post, but she was at fifty to one on Monday at Tattersall's, and not mentioned in the betting last night at Doncaster," quoth a gentleman in a white hat, and whose nether garments fitted his extremities like ecl-

skins, reminding one of that apostrophe addressed to an eminent sporting character :

Look at his breeches
Clinging like leeches
To his thin legs.

"Ah!" responded a bulbous-nosed man whose artistically-folded white scarf was decorated with a fox's-tooth pin, "these 'ere mares upsets all calculations with their will and their won't sort of conduct."

"And Newmarket ain't in it," said a pimply-faced man, in a querulous, piping voice.

"Not in it!" said the gentleman with the attenuated legs. "Why, it's placed third, and what do you call that?"

"Not a morsel of use when I've backed it to be placed first," piped the pimply-faced one. "I know what happened. He's been fooled away, that's what he has. Sir Marmaduke may be clever, but he's just like all these young 'uns—he's too dashed clever to last. He went for a tremendous stake over an uncertain brute like the Dancing Master, and he sacrificed Bushranger to make the running for the other. He ought to have won, that's what he ought. Rode his head off, that's what they did," and, muttering something about there being a wonderful lot of dashed fools about, the pimply-faced gentleman retired in high dudgeon.

"Old Sammy don't like it when his pick don't win, and he's a tidy judge, too, and pricks the garter oftener than most of us," observed the bulbous-nosed man, with a comprehensive wink at the company; "and now, if anybody's had a good race, and wants to know what I'll take, I'm agreeable to give it a name."

"Yes; you're generally that," remarked the spidery-legged one sarcastically, without much reference to circumstances. "I went for this Dancing Master myself, and he don't warrant my calling for 'pop.' But lor', here's Mr. Forrest; he knows all about the colt that made such a show

of all our Newmarket horses last April. What is it? Can't he stay? or is it his beastly temper?"

"I should think he wasn't in the humour," replied Jim, sententiously, as he turned to walk away and digest the news. He wondered whether the grey would have run better in his hands, and what it was that had upset the colt.

The next morning's papers contained a full account of the race, and it appeared thereby that the man of the pimples had been tolerably right in his deduction. Most of the writers were of opinion that Bushranger's chance had been deliberately sacrificed in the interest of the Dancing Master, for which horse he had avowedly made the running. He had finished a fair third, and with unflinching gameness, after forcing the pace nearly the whole way, and it seemed to be the general belief that, had he been handled in more judicious fashion, he would most certainly have proved a thorn in the winner's side at the finish, if he had not fairly beaten her. Comet was pronounced to have shown himself a wonderfully good horse, considering the infirmity of his understandings had precluded his being quite wound up to concert-pitch. The winner and the Dancing Master were pronounced alike the bane of those thorough-going backers of horses, who, betting in small sums simply for sport's sake, were guided mainly in their investments by public form. "What are we to say concerning these two most unsatisfactory animals?" asked one of the cleverest of the critical band. "Fedora, on her previous form, had not a hundred-to-one chance for the Leger; while as for Dancing Master—great horse as he showed himself in the Guineas—he has never since in the least vindicated that performance, and has now confirmed the impression we have always had of him, namely, that he is an arrant cur, and will only win when the race is at his mercy, before half the distance has been traversed. It was the case to-day. Despite the bold front shown by Bushranger at the Rifle Butts, the grey looked like walking in; at the Red House, when the pace became

hot, he cut it palpably, and declined to struggle further. Few of my followers can have had a satisfactory Leger. Don't let them blame me, but the two most inconsistent horses in training—a pair never to be despised, but never to be depended on. Sir Marmaduke, had he pinned his faith to Bushranger, would have probably had a far pleasanter settling next Monday, while the few followers of Fedora have doubtless scarcely got back the money she owes them."

But there was one man who was very jubilant and in high feather at the success of Fedora, and that was Cuthbert Elliston. The mare was trained, though not at Riddleton, at a neighbouring racing-stable; and Elliston knew that she was considered pretty smart by those immediately connected with her. She was, he knew, all wrong when she ran for the Oaks; and, holding as he did, that the Derby horses were very moderate, he and Pearson backed Fedora for the Leger to win them a very nice stake. After the mare's ignominious display at York they, in conjunction with her trainer and owner, looked upon her Doncaster chance as utterly hopeless, and she would never have been even sent there if it had not been for Sam Pearson, who, with true Yorkshire tenacity, was desirous of a run for his money, and offered to pay all her expenses to the Town Moor if her owner would start her for the Leger.

He, in fact, had done just what old Greyson had with regard to the Dancing Master for the Two Thousand, and with equal success. He, his partner, and the Ring, indeed, were the principal winners by Fedora's victory.

"I suppose he wouldn't try with you?" was Bill Greyson's remark as he met Blackton coming moodily back from his bootless ride.

"He's a proper sulky brute, that's what he is," replied the disgusted jockey as the trainer took the horse by the bridle. "Just as he came to the Red House I thought there was nothing in it but Bushranger and myself, and felt sure I should beat him for speed. I got a little shut in at the

turn, and the grey at once curled up, and declined to make any further effort. Just then Fedora came with a wet sail, and I saw had her field safe, but if I'd been on Bushranger we'd have taken the Leger to Newmarket, I fancy."

"I daresay," returned Greyson, quietly. He was no great admirer of Blackton, who was much too garrulous to stand high in the old trainer's estimation. Moreover, he was not the man to make excuses for his charges when they failed to justify the opinion formed about them. The worse they were thought of in their hour of defeat the better the crafty trainer knew was their chance of redeeming their character in some big handicap, and handicaps were a *specialité* Greyson rather laid himself out for. Add to this it was his bounden duty to do his best for Sir Marmaduke, whose horse the Dancing Master was, at all events for the time; but about this latter business he was speedily relieved of all concern. Sir Marmaduke sent for him the day after the race, and came to the point at once with all his characteristic frankness.

"I'm not going to pretend, Greyson, but that I am much disappointed with the Dancing Master's running, but pray don't think I blame you in the least for his most unsatisfactory performance. He was as fit as hands could make him, and if he ran badly it was simply Blackton could do nothing with him. But the mystification about him for betting purposes is now played out. Everybody knows that he is to all intents and purposes my horse, and, therefore, you had better send him down to join my string at Newmarket. Don't think for a moment I'm not satisfied, or suppose Pipes can make more of the horse than you; but he's a queer tempered one, and we shall at all events understand him better when we have him in our own hands."

"I hope you may, Sir Marmaduke. All I can tell you about him is that he's never sick nor sorry, and his legs are of iron. He can both race and stay—*when he likes*. He may win races, but his jockeys, be they who they may, won't. He may take it into his head as he did at Newmarket to

simply smother his field, but he won't be helped by his rider. I can only wish you luck with him, Sir Marmaduke, and he shall be sent off to Pipes to-morrow."

"Thank you, Greyson," replied the baronet. "Hum!" he muttered to himself, as the trainer left the room, "it strikes me I've made a baddish deal of it. I shall most likely never get a good race out of the grey, and I certainly threw away my Leger chance by becoming his temporary owner. Blackton swears he could have won on Bushranger, but then he's such a conceited beggar he always thinks he could have won on anything. My impression is, nothing would have beaten Fedora yesterday, though mine would have doubtless been nearer if he hadn't been made so much use of." And, having arrived at this conclusion, Sir Marmaduke, with his usual nonchalance, dismissed the subject from his mind.

Jim Forrest is amongst those terribly discontented with the result of the big Doncaster race. He cannot help thinking that the Dancing Master would have acquitted himself better in his hands than he did in those of Blackton; and he has only himself to blame that he was not upon the grey's back. He knows it has been a very costly race for his employer and his friends, and he feels very sore in thinking that it might have been in his power to avert this. Captain Farrington, for one, has been very kind to him, and Jim feels pretty sure that that placid plunger was amongst those heavily hit.

The more he thinks of it the more he recognises that his present *incognito* is almost at an end. He is paying one of the ordinary penalties of success of the time we live in; emerge from the ruck, and it matters little what your pseudonym may be—the public before many days will know all about you. Do you suppose we should have been many weeks in ignorance concerning the author of "Ivanhoe" in the present decade, or have been the least in the dark about the "Junius Letters" before half-a-dozen of them had been

penned? No; the electric light, ay, the lime light, is on most of those who distinguish themselves, and their past history speedily unearthed, listened to, and probably published.

Jim Forrest is conscious that from false pride he has missed a great opportunity, perchance lost his patrons much money (there was no saying how the Dancing Master *might* have behaved in his hands), and delayed but a little the discovery that Gerald Rockingham and Jim Forrest were one. To be ashamed of one's trade is pitiful snobbishness. An' you are a brickmaker, stick to it your bricks are of vastly better make than your neighbour's. An' you be an actor, openly proclaim that you are the one man whose reading of Hamlet can be accepted.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SIR MARMADUKE "CALLS FOR HIS JACKET."

THERE were two other events bearing upon this history that marked the close of what was destined to be known in turf chronicles as Comet's year. The winner of the Derby, in the *argot* of the turf, is always sponsor to that. The votaries of the racecourse disdain numerals, and with them '67 is the Hermit's year, '81 Iroquois's year, &c. The first of these was that Jim Forrest received a note from Sir Marmaduke, at the opening October Meeting, which called upon him formally to send in his jacket.

The epistle was kind and courteous in the extreme; it commenced, "Dear Mr. Rockingham," contained no allusion to his heavy losses, nor the slightest hint that Jim, but for his false pride, might perchance have averted them. He merely said he severed their connection with great regret; but that he expected unhesitating obedience from all who served him, and that it would be painful to himself to exact

that from Gerald now he knew his real position. Gerald was not to think that his desire to conceal his identity by refusing to ride at York and Doncaster was the cause of his jacket being called for; "that," continued the baronet, "will speedily cure itself; for, though I promise to respect your secret, it is idle to suppose that it will be many weeks before your story is generally known; but I should feel very uncomfortable about having your father's son in my employment as a servant. Any assistance I can render you I will give; there is no reason you should not have some of my riding when it suits you to take it, but there must be no permanent engagement between us, on account of the feeling I have already mentioned. With considerable admiration for your pluck in choosing such a career, and wishing you every luck in it,

"I remain,

"Yours most sincerely,

"MARMADUKE MARTINDALE."

To Farrington and one or two of his intimates the baronet was perfectly candid about the withdrawal of his jacket. "He told me his story," he said, "and I admire his resolution as much as his riding; but I don't hold with the employment of gentlemen out of their class. It never works; they can't forget their old caste; and every now and again jib at the work. I engaged Forrest with a special object in view, and, when it comes to the point, he declines to ride. He gave his reasons—I understand them; he was ashamed to acknowledge he had lost caste. But I had laid out a stiffish lot of money on the faith of our engagement, and though it perhaps made no difference really, I should certainly not have adopted my late tactics had I not counted on having the call of Jim Forrest."

The second event was that Cuthbert Elliston, flushed with his success over Fedora, conceived the idea of buying Crangle Chase—not the property, for that was far beyond his

mark—but just the house and adjoining land. There had been so far no bid for the property in its integrity, and Writson was sadly contemplating the necessity of selling it piecemeal. The creditors of the late Squire were growing impatient at the tardiness with which his estate was administered; and, if it were possible to hurry a lawyer, would have long ago realised Cranley. But Writson, with all the immovability of his class, insisted that his duty to all concerned required him to sell Cranley to the very best advantage, and that, though some of the land might sell better if disposed of in small lots, the house itself would certainly fetch very much less if shorn of its broad acres; that people who wanted a good country-house invariably wanted a good range of shooting with it, and would hardly look at a place that had only a beggarly five hundred acres attached to it. In selling a property like Cranley one always had to cast about for a purchaser. Men able to spend two hundred thousand pounds in buying an estate were not to be found every market-day; that they would get the money in due course; but it was undoubtedly a matter of some little time. Impatient creditors take this reasoning according to their respective temperaments; the milder trusting "the time may be as little as possible"; the irritable with the peppery retort, that, "if the time is not deuced short, they intend to precious soon know why."

To these latter as to their milder brethren Writson listens perfectly impassive. The old lawyer is determined not to break up a fine landed property if he can help it, and has by no means abandoned the idea of finding a purchaser for it in the whole, although to allay the excited feelings of the creditors to speak metaphorically, within maddening sight of their money, he proceeds leisurely to lot the estate. This naturally very soon reaches Sam Pearson's ears, who, in the course of conversation at the First October Meeting, mentions it to his partner, when, to his unbounded astonishment,

Cuthbert Elliston expresses his intention of buying "the Chase" itself, if the property is sold in lots.

"Why, what the deuce do you want with it?" inquired Pearson.

"A sentimental weakness, Sam; I don't like the old place going clean out of the family."

"But how do you propose to find the money?" inquired the attorney. "I don't know exactly how they'll lot it; but I take it you want at least thirty thousand to buy 'the Chase' with. Besides, you are the last man I should have suspected of a sentimental weakness."

"People always *do* overlook the good points in my character," returned Elliston, with a sneer. "As for the money, another *coup* or two like Fedora, and there will be no trouble about that. Perhaps I want to restore the place to my cousin Gerald, eh!"

"Gerald Rockingham wasn't at Doncaster," replied Pearson, drily.

"What the devil do you mean by that?" snapped his companion.

"It's singular," continued the attorney, "but you never win when Jim Forrest is riding. I am not superstitious, but I shouldn't follow you when he is upon the course."

"No; you're right, Sam. That young whelp's dark face always brings me bad luck. I've said so from the day he won the Two Thousand. I should like him to know that I am owner of the Chase."

"It will annoy him, no doubt, considering the ill blood there is between you."

"Yes; I believe the dislike is pretty mutual," replied Elliston.

"It usually is," rejoined the attorney; "and the bitter words you flung at him that winter's day at Cranley were over hard for a man to forget. If ever there was a case of cur es like chickens coming home to roost it was the taunt

you threw at him about getting his living as a pad-groom or gamekeeper. By Jove, he took the hint, and when he drove Pibroch home a head in front of Phaeton at Goodwood must have felt that he was repaying that gibe with interest."

"What in Heaven's name makes you rake up all the causes of my antipathy? I am not likely to hate him less because you recapitulate the many reasons I have for wishing he may break his neck," retorted Elliston, sharply. "In the meanwhile, I suppose you will see about this Cranley business for me."

"Certainly; but there is no hurry. I know old Writson well; he is not the man to sell, much less let, a property off-hand. You'll have plenty of opportunity of landing another *coup* before you're required to plank up the money."

"So much the better, but I'll buy Cranley if I break over it, if it is only to spite that cursed young whelp."

"By the way," said Pearson, "I had a letter from Writson to know what you proposed to do about those bills. He won't hear of compromising for a thousand, and hints pretty broadly that he thoroughly understands how to make the most of them unless they are redeemed at what *he* considers an adequate price."

"And that is?"

"Three; and if he doesn't get that he hints unmistakably at putting them into the hands of Lord Whitby, and, I suppose, telling him the whole of the Rockingham story highly garnished."

"Yes; and Whitby hates me, and has already said I ought to have been warned off the turf. I can't quite afford another *exposé*, and Whitby would bore both the Jockey and Turf Clubs about it *ad nauseam*. Alister's old friends could make the racing-world look very shy at me, to say nothing of general society."

"Then take my advice. Pay up the three thousand, redeeming thereby the bills, and don't trouble your head about Cranley—a place you don't really want."

"You don't suppose I am going to pay as much as that. If it looks threatening I shall perhaps advance on the original offer, but not to that extent. In the meanwhile when Cranley is in the market let me know, and what the figure is. I daresay part of the purchase-money could be easily left on mortgage, or you could raise it elsewhere in similar manner."

"Yes, no doubt; but I can't, for the life of me, see what you want with the place."

"Never mind—it's my whim," returned Elliston, fiercely "and it shall go hard but what I gratify it."

Pearson said no more. He knew well the dogged obstinacy of the man with whom he had to deal. Heartless in his loves, implacable in his dislikes, the attorney knew that Elliston's hatred of Gerald Rockingham was quite sufficient to make him strain every nerve to become master of Cranley Chase, with no other motive than the malignant desire to pain the boyish cousin to whom he had already wrought sufficient injury. Sam Pearson had seen too much of the seamy side of life not to be thoroughly aware that men are wont to hate those they have wronged, and he did dimly understand that mixed with this feeling in Elliston's case was a superstitious fear that Gerald Rockingham was his evil star on a racecourse. That the presence of some individual is fatal to one's luck is a very common superstition of the gaming-table, and many racing-men have similar fancies. Elliston had certainly some warrant for this feeling as regarded his cousin.

Gerald knew that he had thrown a chance away, but that was nothing. In the position he had reached in his profession he would doubtless have his opportunity of riding the winner of those great three-year-old contests, which are designated the classic races, again before long. But he was honestly sorry he had not gone north, and endeavoured to do his best for Sir Marmaduke and his friends. Another thing, too; he had received a letter from Dollie, upbraiding

him for not fulfilling his promise of meeting her at York. The girl had looked forward to seeing him and hearing him hailed the hero of the hour, and her disappointment was great. Moreover, she was much too quick-witted not to read aright the meaning of his absence, and it troubled her:—

"It was cruel of you, dear Gerald," she wrote, "to throw me over at the last. I had so looked forward to those days on the Knavesmire, and so prayed to witness your triumph, and now you say you cannot come, and all the salt is taken out of my holiday. I am afraid that it was the fear of being recognised prompted you to give up York and Doncaster. But, Gerald, if you are ashamed to be known as a professional and successful jockey in such a horse-loving country as this, where every one thinks so much of a good horse, or a good horseman, how will ever you have the courage to marry a trainer's daughter? I love you very dearly, but, if I thought you could ever be ashamed of me as your wife, I would never go to church with you. Write to me at once, and tell me that it is not so.

"Yours, ever lovingly,
"DOLLIE."

That this letter met with a speedy reply need scarcely be said. Gerald acknowledged the girl was right in her surmise, but indignantly denied that he could ever have any such feeling concerning their marriage. He owned he was a thorough snob to be above avowing his trade, but that he meant manfully to follow his calling wherever it led him in the future, and wound up by saying that nobody had suffered for his foolishness so severely as himself.

Dollie, however, was not quite to be assuaged by soft words. Her next letter was affectionate enough, but she gave Gerald to understand that she would wait for him as long as he liked, that he should choose his own time to proclaim his identity, but that she would not marry him until the world knew that Gerald Rockingham and Jim Forrest were one.

Gerald was not much disturbed by this epistle. He knew now that the time was very near at hand when every one would know that he was Jim Forrest; that fact was likely to be promulgated much sooner than he would be able to marry; but his luck seems to have departed with Sir Marmaduke's jacket. He gets plenty of riding this First October Meeting, and has no cause to complain of his mounts if the way they are backed by their respective stables be any test. Those immediately connected with the horses undoubtedly believe in their chances, but somehow they are never quite good enough, and; do what he will, Jim Forrest cannot succeed in being first past the post. Sir Marmaduke and his followers, on the contrary, are in high feather, and rapidly recovering their Doncaster losses. Cuthbert Elliston, too, who had commenced by backing one of the Panton Lodge favourites, jumps to the conclusion that the stable is in for a run of luck, and steadily follows Sir Marmaduke's colours throughout the meeting, with a result that causes him to exclaim in exulting tones to Pearson, as they travel back to town at the conclusion of the meeting:

"The charm is broken, my star at last is in the ascendant, luck has turned, and I'll buy Cranley Chase. That young beggar has had his day; it's my turn now. They pronounced him a great horseman just because he was fortunate enough to win with Pibroch at Goodwood. He had plenty of chances this week."

"You are talking nonsense if you say the lad can't ride. He can. I told you I should never follow your advice on a racecourse if young Roekingham was there, and I'm a poorer man this week in consequence. But, mark me, I'm not usually a superstitious man, yet I firmly believe that boy will be your ruin. That in the end he's as surely bound to avenge his father over that Phaeton Leger—you remember you would not allow either Greyson or myself to give him a hint—as that we are sitting in this train."

Elliston's sole reply was a savage malediction, but he was

secretly much dismayed at finding that his partner still clung firmly to the idea that young Rockingham was his evil star.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

GERALD'S IDENTITY PROCLAIMED.

WE are most of us blessed with spinster aunts. I am not speaking ironically of that acidulated maiden lady, who, in consideration of having money to leave behind her, deems herself entitled both to cross-examine us about our doings, and lecture us severely should they not meet her approval, but of one of those dear old ladies who are pleased with small attentions, who take the greatest interest in the careers of all the family, who keep up a desultory correspondence with every branch of it, and are always doing small kindnesses to some of "the failures" amongst us. They invariably know more about the family as a whole than any one, and are usually, in some occult way, among the first to hear of any good or evil that may have befallen us. Ellen Rockingham had an aunt of the latter type, whom she regarded as a real infliction. Aunt Mary, Mrs. Rockingham's elder sister, was a sweet-tempered chatty old lady, with a modest independence and a large circle of acquaintance, amongst whom she was extremely popular. Moving, as she did, from one country-house to another, and living when in London in quiet apartments in the vicinity of Portman Square, she was always quite *au fait* with all the current topics of the day, to say nothing of its gossip. Ellen was one of the few people who didn't get on with Aunt Mary, and the cause of discord was Ellen's extreme religious views. Miss Stacey was quite orthodox, but very conventional in her worship. The old lady was quite content with going to church once on the Sabbath, and deemed it no

great sin to indulge in forty winks during the sermon. She was quiet and unostentatious in her little charities, and perhaps did no great good in her life, but then she assuredly did many little kindnesses and no harm. Aunt Mary a little laughed at Ellen's night-schools and plans for the elevation of the bucolic mind, and thought that the Cranley people infinitely preferred their Christmas coals and blankets to drowsy discourses, and the shrewd practical help in the time of trouble of the late rector to the methodistical teaching and stern rebukes for improvidence that the present incumbent so delighted to administer. Of course Aunt Mary was right. Humanity does prefer a shilling and a kindly word to the shilling with the addendum of a severe lecture on the want of thrift that necessitates the need of it.

Now, Aunt Mary, in the expansiveness of her nature, when she heard of Alister Rockingham's death and the ruin that followed, had written promptly to her sister, and proposed that she and Ellen should make their home with her, a proposition which was kindly but firmly rejected. Still, Aunt Mary naturally took the keenest interest in the fallen fortunes of her sister. Some of the sunniest days of her life had been passed at Cranley, and she had entertained a most sincere affection for her brother-in-law. That Aunt Mary maintained a constant correspondence with St. Leonard's Place may easily be imagined, and she was therefore fully informed of Gerald's mysterious disappearance. She knew how uneasy his mother and sister were about him, but what she did not know was the change his father's death had wrought in Gerald. The last time she saw her nephew he had been a bright, laughter-loving boy, but the stern compulsion of earning his own living, and the knowledge that his mother and sister must depend upon him for those luxuries which were almost necessities for women brought up as they had been, had hardened his character and transformed him at one bound into a man. The small income

derived from the few thousands settled on Mrs. Rockingham at her marriage was all that she and Ellen had left to them, and Gerald was very anxious to supplement that to some extent.

Mixing a good deal in society, Miss Stacey was not very long before she heard the mysterious Jim Forrest talked about. People, indeed, began to be very full of this little romance after Goodwood. From the club smoking-rooms the story of the gentleman who had turned professional jockey speedily spread all through the London world, and many curious eyes were bent on the lad's dark face from among the brilliant throng that crowded the Grand Stand at the great dual meeting. Still, Jim escaped recognition on that occasion, but the attention that had now been drawn to him made it, as Farrington had warned him, quite impossible that he could do so much longer.

Ere the October Meetings were over at Newmarket he had been recognised by some Yorkshire gentlemen as young Gerald Rockingham, and the fact was soon noised all over the Heath. The first intimation Gerald received that his *incognito* was at an end came from Lord Whitby. The news had reached the ears of that sporting but choleric old peer, and, happening to encounter Gerald shortly afterwards in the Birdcage, he astonished him not a little by holding out his hand, and exclaiming :

"I shall be proud to make your acquaintance, Mr. Rockingham. I knew your poor father well, and a better, kinder-hearted fellow never breathed. Gad! I admire your pluck; and, by Jove, you're likely to do what neither your father nor myself ever did—make money out of racing."

"I had to do something for myself, Lord Whitby," replied Gerald, as he shook hands, "and bar ride and shoot there seemed nothing I could do. I have done pretty well so far."

"Pretty well! I should think you had. The way you got Pibroch home at Goodwood would have been a credit to any

of the old hands. Damme, I'll give you a turn myself before long. I can trust you because you are one of us, but for all that don't back your mount when you don my colours. My horses never can win somehow."

"Jim Forrest" thanked his lordship, but for all that he did not particularly covet any of his riding. The irascible peer was notorious on the turf for his persistent bad luck, and his violent outbursts of temper in consequence. It was not the money, for he was enormously wealthy, and, to do him justice, nobody cared less about money than Lord Whitby, but he did hate being beaten. In the first tempest of his wrath at defeat—and horses will at times fail to do what is expected of them—he was wont to cast round for some scapegoat upon whom the cause of his disappointment might be properly fathered. Obviously his trainer and jockey stood out as the proper recipients of his ever strongly expressed feelings on such occasions, and no man on the turf had changed his trainers and jockeys so often as Lord Whitby. It struck Jim at once that a ride on one of his lordship's nameless horses might be productive of much unpleasantness, albeit he had done his very best by his mount. His not naming his colts was another idiosyncrasy of the hot-tempered though kind-hearted nobleman.

That the mysterious Jim Forrest is none other than the son of Alistair Rockingham, who died a ruined man at the commencement of the year, stricken to death by his terrible losses over the Phaeton Leger, is a tale that spreads like wildfire through the clubs and midst country-houses; and it is not long before Aunt Mary, sojourning in one of these latter, is made aware of it, her informant having no suspicion that Miss Stacey was the aunt of this young centaur who had just appeared above the turf horizon. Aunt Mary was thunderstruck—she hardly knew for some hours what to think of it. That a Rockingham should be getting his living in such fashion seemed terrible in the old lady's eyes, but at the same time she could not but admire the way in which her

feather-pated nephew had met the shock of disaster; and then again Aunt Mary had lived too much in the horse-loving county and amongst racing-men not to feel a wee bit proud of his deeds of "derring-do" in the saddle. No need to laugh at the word, though it is only the initiated of the racecourse who comprehend the nerve, head, and hands it requires to come round Tattenham Corner "on the rails."

Aunt Mary, on the receipt of this news, hurried up to her bedroom to think it all out. Firstly, had Mrs. Rockingham and Ellen the faintest idea of what Gerald was doing—it was some weeks since she had heard from them? and secondly, what were they all to do about it? That Gerald had taken his life into his own hands, and was little likely to listen to what kith or kin said concerning the manner of it, was a thing that Aunt Mary had no conception of. The good soul thought that she would have to assist at a little family council, consisting of herself, her sister, and her niece, at which, whether it was possible for Gerald to continue this—well, she would call it eccentric freak—might be calmly debated; and, actuated by that impression, made up her mind to write to York at once. The only question was whether it were best to write to Mrs. Rockingham or Ellen. She was quite aware that she did not quite hit it off with her niece, but then she was quite alive to her being a very much stronger character than her mother. Still, Aunt Mary could not help thinking that Ellen would be very much shocked at the calling it had pleased her brother to adopt. It might be lucrative; he might be a great success in it; but surely it was rather *infra dig.* for a Rockingham to be riding race-horses for hire.

She knew that, though Ellen was no doubt sincere in her Calvinistic doctrines, humility entered but smally into her profession of faith. She judged rightly that her niece would carry her head high as ever in adversity, being quite aware that Ellen was as proud a girl as ever stepped. She felt pretty sure that Mrs. Rockingham and her daughter

must be still in ignorance of this caprice—so Aunt Mary called it to herself—of Gerald's. Still, it was only right that they should be made acquainted with it, now poor Alister was gone. Gerald had nobody to look to for advice but his mother and aunt, and a boy of eighteen required some guidance in shaping his life.

Ah! Aunt Mary, you don't know that boys with any grit in them settle these things best for themselves, and without much reference to their womankind.

So Aunt Mary sat down and indited a letter to her niece, in which she told the story of Gerald's career as far as she had been able to learn it. There were plenty of people who were able to narrate the history of Jim Forrest, but Miss Stacey was a little shy in her inquiries if she thought people the least aware that she was that rising horseman's aunt. Still, so much was it the topic of conversation, that in a few days she had got over all sensitiveness on that point. The men—and their opinion does count for something in the long run—were pretty well unanimous in their admiration both of his pluck and his horsemanship.

"When a fellow's ruined, by Jove! you know, what's a fellow to do?" observed the Hon. Bob Maxley, who, having reached that same crisis some ten years previously, had lived comfortably on his friends and relations ever since. "He's quite right to see if he can't get back some of the money the confounded beggars took from his father"—a speech which, though a little incoherent, insomuch as that the bookmakers, who follow the *figures*, should in the long run invariably get the best of the backers, who follow their *fancies*—simply meant that Alister Rockingham had shared the fate that has attended so many "all through a-backing of the favourite!"

Even the women for the most part seemed to think there was nothing derogatory in the line Gerald had taken up. It was so eccentric!—it was so romantic! Then, he was a success! He was quite a lion, and they love that still more. Then, again, he was said to be good-looking, and tongues

were wagging much about him; and, finally, when Lady Di Franton declared she would bring up her youngest boy to the same profession, Aunt Mary altogether succumbed before the verdict of that sporting peeress, and wished now that she had unfolded the tale of Gerald's iniquity in less despondent fashion.

We are all influenced more or less by the opinions of our fellows—women more especially—and with good reason, for none of them can afford to ignore any combined opinion of their own sex. Aunt Mary suddenly found herself quite a person of some little importance, simply owing to her relationship with the fashionable jockey. That all this should produce a complete reaction in Aunt Mary's opinion was only natural. Upon first hearing of Gerald's career she had felt not a little ashamed; now, as might have been expected, she waxed rather garrulous concerning it, and pronounced his conduct noble—nay, heroic! confided to her hearers that her nephew was the grandest horseman this or any other age had seen, and then proceeded to recount sundry of his youthful exploits on his pony with the York and Ainstey, or over the Cranley pastures.

At length Aunt Mary received a reply to her letter. Ellen's answer ran as follows:—

“MY DEAR AUNT,—

“You know how anxious we have been about Gerald and what he was doing, but even that anxiety was easier to bear than the dreadful tidings you sent us. How he can so utterly have forgotten what he owes to his family as to accept such employment as you talk of would be beyond my comprehension but for one thing. He is the victim at present of an unfortunate entanglement with a young person, the daughter of a man of that class; and though, in the first instance, I looked upon it as a mere boyish flirtation, I fear it is likely to end much more seriously.

“I fancy I can hear you say, ‘You don't mean he is think-

ing of marrying her?' Yes, my dear aunt; I am very much afraid that is what he will do, in spite of all our remonstrances. You don't know how Gerald has altered of late. He has become so hard and obstinate, and takes his own way about things without reference to mamma or me. That the strange career he has adopted was at this young woman's suggestion I have no doubt; that our united persuasions will fail to induce him to abandon it I have also no doubt, and yet surely it is our duty to try what we can do.

"Here Gerald's dreadful secret is as yet unknown; but for you, Aunt Mary, how I pity you! I wonder how you ever dare face society. It must be so very awkward to be stared at as the near relative of a professional jockey, or to have to listen to the comments made on Gerald's conduct by those ignorant of the relationship. Our ruin, except for mamma's sake, I felt but little, and cannot help saying that I think Gerald might have spared us this disgrace. I will send you his address as soon as I know it, and you will write to him, won't you? It is our duty to do all we can to save him from the life of degradation he has chosen.

"Good-bye. Kindest love from mamma, who, like myself, is quite upset by this new affliction.

"Ever, dear Aunt Mary,

"Your affectionate niece,

"ELLEN ROCKINGHAM."

The news that Gerald meant to marry among those of his vocation was a blow Miss Stacey was quite unprepared for. She knew very well that though society in its caprice might applaud "Jim Forrest," the successful jockey, and even make a lion of him, they would not recognise his wife if she sprang from that class; and then Aunt Mary pictured a buxom young woman with hoydenish manner as unlike Dollie as possible, and knit her brows as she wondered what the family would be able to make of her. However, she reflected Gerald was only just nineteen, and Ellen probably

overrated his obstinacy. When he was seriously talked to by them all he would no doubt see that this could not be. Boys did get engaged in this ridiculous fashion sometimes but nothing ever came of it. Gerald's offending would terminate, no doubt, in the usual fashion.

CHAPTER XXXIV

ELLEN CONSULTS JOHN THORNDYKE.

HER letter to Aunt Mary barely conveyed Ellen's real view on the subject of Gerald's offending. She really could not have been more horrified at hearing her brother was somebody's stud-groom; a most respectable and trustworthy position, no doubt, but not one that any girl, born a lady, could feel anything but shocked at finding her brother holding. She racked her brain as to what was to be done. That anything she, her mother, or her aunt could say would turn him from his course she utterly disbelieved, but that he was to be left to continue such a disgraceful calling without stern remonstrances on the part of his near relatives Ellen thought would be monstrous, and argue disgraceful neglect of a *mere* boy on their part. But who was to speak to him? Ah, that was not quite so easy to say. There were plenty of people, no doubt, who might speak, but to whom of them was Gerald likely to pay the slightest attention? To those related or connected with him, Miss Rockingham made answer to herself—None.

Then Ellen had an inspiration—what if she should ask John Thorndyke to expostulate with him? She did not herself at all hold with those very Broad Church views which characterised the rector of St. Margaret's, but her common sense told her that, could they be brought together, this was the man of all others to talk to about her brother

and the disgrace he was bringing upon his family. And yet she felt a little shy about entering into family affairs with Mr. Thorndyke. Still, who was she to speak to? Something must be done, and at once, and, if any one could appeal to Gerald with some chance of success, the liberal-minded and whilom sporting rector—for he owned freely and mirthfully to that backsliding—was, she thought, the man to do it. Miss Rockingham had seen a good deal of John Thorndyke lately, and had conceived a great respect and esteem for him. She still held that his bold views and frank outspoken treatment of things religious savoured of want of reverence, yet she was fain to confess that she could not call Mr. Thorndyke himself irreverent, while she acknowledged that the man was thoroughly honest and in earnest. If his treatment of his parishioners was, to say the best of it, peculiar in her eyes, she knew that he nevertheless worked hard amongst them, and had undoubtedly won their confidence and regard, while those short stirring addresses, with a good deal of sting in them, too, at times, she saw, roused the congregation in a manner that she looked in vain for elsewhere. Miss Rockingham wondered at times whether Mr. Thorndyke might not understand how to influence men's hearts better than Mr. Brushley, who, though he preached at considerable length, was wont to have a soporific effect among his hearers. She was still a constant attendant in the latter's church, and took no inconsiderable part in the work of that parish; but in this, her hour of trouble, it was John Thorndyke whose help she determined to seek, and not that of the clergyman of her election. Ellen felt instinctively that Gerald would listen with scant patience to an appeal from Mr. Brushley, but thought somehow with John Thorndyke it might be different.

It was a cold, raw November day that Ellen, wrapped in furs, relics of her former grandeur, of the time when she was Miss Rockingham of Cranley Chase, made her way across the city in the direction of Walmgate Bar.

The parish of St. Margaret's clustered round the splendid old gate, which, with barbiean and portcullis, dominates the Hull Road, standing in rather a poor-looking part of the city, tenanted in great measure by the artisan class. Ellen had never been to Mr Thorndyke's house before, but had no difficulty in finding it, there being plenty of people ready to point out where t' parson lived. In answer to her inquiry Miss Rockingham was informed that Mr. Thorndyke was out, but would probably be in before many minutes. Would she step in and wait?

"I'll show you into the study, if you'll excuse it, Miss," said the servant-girl in response to Ellen's assent. "There is no fire in the drawing-room, and it's a raw morning. Master said he should be in by this, and he's mostly pretty close to his time."

Ellen looked round the room with the curiosity we all feel upon first seeing the sanctum of any one in whom we feel interested. It was not a large room by any means, and the walls were lined from top to bottom with bookcases. In the centre stood a writing-table, not a gimcrack dandified davenport, but a large, serviceable oaken one, covered with dark leather, and well garnished with drawers. Another plain, square table in the window, a comfortable armchair on either side of the fireplace, and a few other chairs scattered about, pretty well completed the furniture of the apartment. The tops of the bookcases were decorated with the busts of some of the most illustrious Greek and English poets—Æschylus and Homer, Shakespeare and Milton, &c., while the bookcases contained a *mélange* that would have misled considerably any one studying their contents as to the position in the world occupied by their proprietor. Rows of the Greek dramatists and of the English classics clothed the shelves on the one side of the room, while on the other was a nearly complete edition of the "Racing Calendar," works on farming, treatises on angling, beginning with Izaak Walton, and then going down to what the more modern writers on scien-

tific fishing had written on the subject. Judging from that room you would have pronounced the master of the house a scholar and a sportsman, but there was nothing suggestive that he was a clergyman.

Ellen had not to wait long before Mr. Thorndyke entered.

"Charmed to see you, Miss Rockingham, though I regret that I should have kept you waiting. Still I am glad that my people had the *nous* to show you into a room where there was a fire."

"I have come to consult you about a rather painful business," said Ellen, as she shook hands.

"I am sorry to hear it," replied Thorndyke, "but don't be in a hurry. Take your own time to tell me what your trouble is. I need scarcely say you are welcome to any advice or assistance I can give. Nothing the matter with Mrs. Rockingham, I trust?"

"No, thank you; my mother is quite well. It is about my brother that I wish to speak to you."

John Thorndyke made no reply, but quietly dropped into the armchair opposite Ellen, and waited for her to begin. He knew at once that she had at last discovered how Gerald was earning his bread, and from what the rector knew of Miss Rockingham's feelings on such points guessed that the discovery was a cruel mortification to her.

"You know how anxious we were to find out where my brother was and what he was doing; we have heard at last, and, oh! Mr. Thorndyke, it's too dreadful—too disgraceful! He is getting his living as a common jockey!"

"Not quite that, Miss Rockingham, for he is already eminent in the profession of his adoption. You must forgive me neither feeling surprised nor shocked at what you tell me. I have known it some time. I don't know why, but last August, at Durnford's, when Farrington told us the history of Jim Forrest, I jumped at the conclusion that he was your brother. Still it was not till a couple of months later that I found my surmise was correct, and the confirma-

tion of it came in a letter Farrington wrote to Durnford, in which he said, 'Fancy, my gentleman jockey, the Jim Forrest I told you about, turns out to be the brother of that handsome Miss Rockingham whom I met at your house last summer.'

"Yes; my aunt wrote word that the story was in every one's mouth. Poor Aunt Mary! No doubt, she hardly dare go out for fear of being pointed at as the lady who has got a professional jockey for a nephew."

"Quite the reverse, I imagine, from what I hear. There is something so romantic in the idea of a son recovering from the quicksands of the turf the argosy his father lost therein that your brother, Miss Rockingham, if he chose, might be the lion of the day. Titled and fashionable ladies would compete for his company at their table; but I am told he lives the life of an anchorite, and is not to be wooed from his seclusion by mere 'cakes and ale' or 'ginger hot i' the mouth.'"

"Mr. Thorndyke!" cried Ellen, rising indignantly, "I come to you in my trouble, and you jeer at me—make a jest of what assuredly is no jesting matter to me,"

"Miss Rockingham," said the rector quietly, but with a sternness the girl had never encountered before in his manner, "I am not in the habit of jeering at people who come to me in their hour of sorrow. My office brings before me too many tales of real suffering that I am powerless to alleviate not to leave me tender-hearted and, I trust, sympathetic. If I have treated your trouble somewhat lightly it is because it is imaginary. I have told you what I firmly believe to be the truth concerning it. Your brother is not held by the world to have disgraced himself, but, on the contrary, to have distinguished himself, and might, if he chose, be the lion of the hour."

"You can't really mean this, Mr. Thorndyke!" cried Ellen, perfectly aghast at such an utterly new reading of Gerald's conduct.

"Indeed I do. I look upon it that the world generally have the good sense to recognise the pluck and independent spirit that led your brother to turn and support himself in the manner he best might, instead of sponging on his friends for the miserable bread of indolence. Remember, Miss Rockingham, that it is not given to all of us to follow the path in life we would have fain chosen for ourselves."

"And I counted upon you to speak to him, and point out the disgrace he was bringing upon his name and family," murmured Ellen.

"But I don't see that he is doing anything of the kind," rejoined Thorndyke. "Although I have no plea on which to intrude my advice upon your brother, still, had he fallen into vicious courses, or amongst evil associates, I would have done your bidding, Miss Rockingham. Gerald is leading a healthful life, and following a profession that requires energy, abstinence, and self-control. A young fellow can go through no better discipline; the worst of it is it's a little too severe, and apt to produce a reaction resulting in a very Capua of self-indulgence."

"And you don't think we ought to remonstrate with him?" exclaimed Ellen, in a state of unmitigated surprise at the view Mr. Thorndyke took of her brother's proceedings.

"I think you had better leave Gerald to himself. From the independence of character he has already shown I should say he has taken his future into his own hands, and is little likely to brook remonstrance or advice from any one."

"I don't know what to think about it," replied Ellen, sadly.

"Miss Rockingham, let me tell you a little story," said the rector, quietly. "When I was at the University there was a young fellow there from whom great things were expected in the future. He was not only amongst the foremost in the cricket-field, and devoted to all kinds of sport,

but he stood high in the estimation of the dons besides, for he worked, as he played, with all his might, and fought his way upwards till he was not only in the University Eleven but had taken high honours to boot. The Bar was the career he had marked out for himself, and he was about to leave the University and commence the pursuit of fortune in that arduous profession when the sudden death of his father changed the whole current of his life. His father was a quiet country clergyman, who died, leaving behind him a shy, delicate widow and an invalid daughter, besides this young fellow at college. The mother, as those shy, sensitive women always do, trembled at the bare idea of transplantation, whilst the daughter was equally dismayed at the idea of facing a new world. Where they were they knew every one; they had numerous friends even amongst the tradespeople. The late rector had been very popular, and at the earnest request of the parishioners, backed by the strong testimonials in his favour of the authorities of his college, the bishop offered the living to his son, proposing to put in a curate in charge till such time as the son could get ordained, and otherwise qualify. Whether he did rightly or no is not for me to say, but my friend, after taking one night to think over it, accepted the bishop's offer. It was the one way he could keep a comfortable home, much less the home they were attached to, over the heads of his mother and sister. You may say he had no right to embrace so sacred a vocation without feeling a decided call for it. He acted as he thought right. He sacrificed himself for those nearest and dearest to him, and, from the moment he elected to take up the cross, abandoned all those pursuits of which hitherto he had been so passionately fond, as incompatible with his new profession. Like your brother, Miss Rockingham, he was compelled to embark in a career not of his own electing, but whatsoever his hand found to do he did it with all his might, and has ever laboured honestly and conscientiously to do his duty in that path of life to which it pleased

God—not himself, mind—to call him. A man, I hold, can do no more.”

John Thorndyke became silent, and was apparently absorbed in reverie. Ellen broke the stillness by never a word.

At last she spoke.

“Mr. Thorndyke, you are wiser and better than I; and I beg your pardon for troubling you with my foolish pride. Your story—for of course it is your own—is strangely like my brother’s; but—but you had the alternative of—I can’t help saying it—embracing the profession of a gentleman; while poor Gerald ——”

“Had to embrace a more healthy, lucrative, and, to him, congenial career. Pray don’t distress yourself about your brother, Miss Rockingham. You will find most men and women, whose opinion is worth having—ay, and worldly people, too—will endorse my opinion, and admire your brother’s pluck and independence.”

“I hope we may get used to it in time,” replied Ellen, with just a slight shake in her voice—for this really was a serious trouble to the girl; “and that Aunt Mary may not find it a serious annoyance in society. And now I must say good-bye, with many apologies for trespassing so long upon your good nature. Only one question more, she added, softly, “I trust your mother and sister are happy?”

“They have both been at rest now some years, Miss Rockingham; but that their last days on earth were tranquil was an inexpressible consolation to me. Good-bye.”

John Thorndyke escorted her to the door bareheaded; and, as Ellen walked home, she thought about the rector of St. Margaret’s in a way she never had yet. He had become a hero in her eyes.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE DANCING MASTER PROVES INCORRIGIBLE.

A LETTER from Aunt Mary confirmatory of Thorndyke's words did much to reconcile Ellen to Gerald's present course of life. That it was right for a Rockingham to ride races for hire she could not believe, any more than it would be that he should drive a cab. It was a comfort to find that the world looked leniently upon it, and regarded the affair apparently as a piece of pardonable eccentricity. She was not blind to the independent spirit Gerald had shown, and upon what John Thorndyke had laid such stress, but she did wish it had taken some other direction. Surely he might have found something better to do than race-riding. Ellen did not know what a well-paid profession jockeyship was in these days, nor did she quite understand the difficulty a young gentleman, with no special qualifications, had about finding something to do.

Suddenly it occurred to Ellen that she had forgotten to confide to Mr. Thorndyke the more serious part of Gerald's offending—to wit, his contemplated marriage. Surely Mr. Thorndyke would not approve of Gerald's marrying out of his class. That could have nothing to do with "the spirit of independence" so much lauded; and even the rector of St. Margaret's, liberal as he was in his ideas, could hardly approve of such a fusion of classes as that marriage would be. Then it suddenly occurred to Miss Rockingham that, much as she valued the opinion of John Thorndyke, it was quite possible her brother might see no necessity for the rector's approval on a matter so nearly concerning himself. Moreover, Mr. Thorndyke had already declared that he had no plea upon which to interfere in Gerald's affairs, and given her to understand that only to rescue the lad from a dissolute life, and at the earnest desire of his people, could he have

any pretext for meddling with Gerald in any way. Now Gerald was doing nothing of that sort, but was leading a steady, hard-working life from all accounts, so Ellen sorrowfully came to the conclusion that it would be useless to ask his advice about that siren Dollie.

The dead season, as racing-men call it, had now commenced; that is to say, the legitimate racing-year was finished, and till the saddling-bell pealed forth on the Carholme at Lincoln turfites had nothing to do but to study the "Calendar" and discuss the events of the past twelve months. No story perhaps more bandied about than that of Gerald Rockingham; for all race-goers, as well as society, knew now that he and Jim Forrest were one. Gerald had thrown off all disguise about it, and, though he still retained his assumed name of "Jim Forrest," frankly admitted to all who cared to know that he was the son of Alister Rockingham.

The promulgation of his real name, to tell the truth, promised to do the young fellow considerable good. He had already shown that he was an artist in the saddle, capable of holding his own with the foremost jockeys of the day, and many an old friend of his father's followed Lord Whitby's example, and promised to give him a turn when the game began again.

Gerald, of course, wrote openly now to his own people concerning his career. He told them how well he was doing, how he had already money in the bank, and how high were his hopes for the future. About Dollie he said nothing, but Ellen did not augur there was any likelihood of his engagement falling through from such ominous silence. Still, all that winter, though his letters were frequent, he never came to York. He remitted more than one comfortable little cheque to St. Leonard's Place, but pleaded he was too busy studying his profession to have time even to run up at Christmas, at which Mrs. Rockingham made vehement protest. But it was no use; Gerald remained resolutely at Newmarket, where he volunteered to give a canter, when

weather permitted, to any horse requiring one; and Mr. Pipes, with whom he had become a great favourite, more than once invited him to give some of the Panton Lodge colts "a lesson," which his patience, tact, and delicacy of hand made really invaluable to a nervous young one. But this Gerald steadily declined to do. He made some trivial excuse at first, but at last told the trainer right out that, handsomely as Sir Marmaduke had always behaved to him, he could not forget that the baronet had taken his jacket away, and, therefore, he could not think of interfering in his stable without express orders from him, which, as Sir Marmaduke was away gambling at Nice, shooting pigeons, and fruitlessly endeavouring to break the bank at Monte Carlo, he could hardly be expected to give.

Still, Gerald worked hard that winter, and was constantly on the back of some awkward-tempered colt, employed in the not very enviable task of teaching it manners, and before the public were hurrying to Lincoln to once more try to pick the winner of that most difficult of handicaps, and lose their money by backing the always beaten favourite for "the Brocklesby's," the Newmarket trainers had come to the conclusion that there wasn't a lad at Newmarket that could communicate such confidence to a nervous "young one" as Jim Forrest, and many were the good-natured assurances that he needn't fear but what he'd get plenty of riding in the coming season.

We have all our days, our seasons. What ordinary shooting-man does not remember the day on which it seemed he couldn't go wrong, could not miss them if he tried? Many of us can recall that day in the racket-court when we played a good seven aces over our game, and astonished our friends in the gallery not a little. Billiards the same; and what hunting-man does not recollect the time he got well away with the leading hounds, slipping the whole field by a quarter of a mile or so, and, his blood up, rode as he never did before or since? So it is with racing, and old turfites

can recollect "Sir Joseph's" year, more than one of them: but '51 will do for a sample, Mr. Merry's, "The Baron's," a very constellation of triumphs, and, latterly, Lord Falmouth's. This coming season was destined to be known in turf-lore as Lord Whitby's and Jim Forrest's year. The fates, tired at last, it may be presumed, of persecuting that irascible nobleman, seemed to have handed him over to be the spoilt child of Fortune; and from the Craven Meeting all through the year his lordship's well-known colours were seen continually in the van. True to his word, he had commenced by giving Jim Forrest some of his riding, and Jim was not the man to throw away a chance when he really had a good horse under him. As he scored victory after victory for his employer, Lord Whitby, to whom a series of successes were extremely titillating on account of the rarity with which such triumphs had been vouchsafed him, was in high good humour with his new jockey. He somewhat over-estimated his horsemanship, and, forgetting that he had a better lot of colts than it had ever been his luck to own before, vowed that Jim Forrest was the best jockey on the turf; "and then, by Jove, sir, he's a Rockingham, and one knows he'll ride straight," a remark which, though doubtless true of Gerald, conveyed a rather unfair insinuation against the majority of his colleagues.

Sir Marmaduke, on the contrary, and his followers, had so far been singularly unfortunate. Mr. Pipes had the mischance to get that bane of trainers, influenza, into his stable, with the usual result—his charges all the first part of the season were rarely quite themselves, while in some of the worst cases it had been found hopeless to get them ready; and more than one rich stake, which had been apparently at Sir Marmaduke's mercy, had to be abandoned, because his representative was *hors de combat*. Notable the case this with the flying Atalanta, who had proved herself about the best two-year-old in training last season. She was very heavily engaged, and apparently her taking the One Thou-

sand Guincas and Oaks was a mere question of health. She had been smitten so badly with this curse of racing-stables that it was questionable whether she would ever recover her form during the present campaign, and what made the matter still worse was the well-known fact that when fillies, in racing parlance, lose their form at three years old, they are apt to never recover it.

Even in this Jim Forrest's star was to a certain extent in the ascendant, for Sir Marmaduke, upon hearing from Mr. Pipes what Forrest had said when asked to handle some of his horses in the winter, chose to take umbrage at Jim's refusal, and consequently never offered him a mount, whereby Jim was probably spared discomfiture on more than one occasion, as the baronet's string apparently couldn't win even a selling race.

Yet may be sure Jim's career was closely watched in St. Lequard's Place. The widow took to studying the sporting news again as she had been used to at the zenith of her husband's turf career, but with infinitely less trepidation than had come to her in latter days. She did not associate, poor soul, any danger with the race-course, except that of gambling, and she was assured that Gerald did not do that; nor did he. He bet at times, as everybody connected with the turf does, but he could not be called a regular speculator. Still, he was putting together a very nice little nest-egg, and towards this Lord Whitby, who was as open-handed as he was hot-tempered, not a little contributed. He was now most thoroughly established in the very front rank of his profession, in receipt of retaining salaries from both Lord Whitby and another well-known magnate of the sporting world. Sir Marmaduke more than once regretted his severance with Jim Forrest; "not but what," he would say ruefully to his great ally, Captain Farrington, "it don't much matter who's up on such a lot of half-trained devils as all ours are this season." There was one exception, and that was the Dancing Master; the influenza had affected him but

slightly, and merely necessitated a slight stoppage in his work during that bitter spring-time. Mr. Pipes, like Bill Greyson, had conceived an immense opinion of the horse's capabilities; but he also recognised that the horse equally had an opinion about when it was necessary to exert himself, and that unfortunately seldom coincided with that of his owner and trainer. Mr. Pipes was used to deal with all sorts of equine temper; but he candidly confessed that "the Dancer" was a puzzler.

He tried—as all trainers do nowadays who know their business—coaxing, patience, and the tenderest handling; but "the Dancer" was not to be cajoled with lumps of sugar—either practically or metaphorically. That wilful quadruped had sucked in the idea apparently with his mother's milk—she *was* a jaundiced-tempered matron—that he was to have his own way in this weary world, and could not be got to comprehend that horses are born to servitude. No; they could make nothing of him in the Panton Lodge stable. When he was tried just before the Claret Stakes, at the Craven Meeting, he galloped like a lion, and in the *argot* of the racecourse made his antagonists lie down; but in the actual race, three days afterwards, he never showed at all, and Blackton once more energetically pronounced him the greatest coward in training.

"It's not that, Sir Marmaduke," replied Mr. Pipes in answer to Blackton's remark just after the race; "the beggar can stay, and is game enough when he means winning; but, damme, I can't help thinking he stands in with the book-makers, and runs for them instead of for us whenever he's backed."

"I don't quite know what to think, Pipes. He failed at Epsom, the same at Doncaster, and now again, over the 'Ditch In' for the Clarets. He wins over the Rowley Mile, the only time he ever wins. It looks to me as if he couldn't get further, and that he's been run ever since out of his distance."

"It's not that, Sir Marmaduke," replied the trainer, "it's his beastly temper."

"It's his want of heart," said Blackton, as he turned and walked sulkily away.

"Get him ready for the Hunt Cup at Ascot," said the baronet, curtly. "If he gets in well—and he must—I'll stand him a raker for that, and if he fails us then Bill Greyson may have him back again at once. Better he paid for his corn than me."

In writing the wonderfully romantic narrative of Gerald Rockingham's unprecedented turf career it is difficult to keep clear of the mistake of becoming a mere volume of the Racing Calendar. Continuous repetition of sporting stories of the same description is apt to wax tedious; indeed, in these times it is so easy to bear a little too heavily upon any subject; and, writing as I do within half-a-mile of Westminster, I may surely add, talk too much on any subject. Parliament Street is thick with verbiage, national business is at a standstill, while the six hundred and fifty windbags that represent the nation are still busily engaged in emulous cackle.

For the above reason it is necessary to pass somewhat rapidly over the racing of this year, and simply record the fact that the Dancing Master was allotted a weight in the Hunt Cup which, conjoined with the fact that the horse was extremely well, made the Panton Lodge people regard his chance as an immense one, should he only take it into his head to run kindly. Sir Marmaduke adhered to his before-expressed intention, and backed the horse to win him an enormous stake, which he was easily enabled to do, from the known uncertainty of the animal's temper, at a very liberal price. Once more did the erratic Dancing Master betray the confidence of his new owner. Indulging in quite uncalled-for gambols at the post, he got a very indifferent start when the flag eventually fell; but, going like a bolt from a catapult when he did go, his tremendous speed enabled

him to catch his horses as the hill was topped, and the gay-coloured troop came within view of the stand. Anxious to take a good place, Blackton immediately afterwards hustled him a little, and, just as Farrington exclaimed "He means it at last, Marm," the uncertain brute, determined not to be put out of his way by any one, shut up, and declined to make another effort.

This last exhibition of the grey's temper was enough for the baronet; he came to the conclusion that Blackton was right, and that the colt was a rank coward, and ordered his trainer to send him back to Riddleton forthwith. To Mr. Pipes's suggestion that they had better keep the colt a little longer, Sir Marmaduke replied curtly,

"Certainly not; I can't afford to give him another chance. He's cost me about twenty thousand already, first and last, and would be a perpetual temptation if I kept him on the premises. Send him back to Greyson next week. He may be the best colt in the kingdom, but he'd break the Bank of England."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

GERALD VISITS YORK.

IF his own people had not seen Gerald, neither had his sweetheart. Since that hurried visit just after the Egham Meeting he had not set foot in Yorkshire; he had intended then to have returned in a week and take part in the various contests on the Knavesmire, but, as we have seen, false pride had caused him not to keep that engagement. Dollie hardly knew what to think of things. It was true that Gerald wrote lovingly and frequently, and spoke in the most sanguine way of the future; but the girl did think that, if he cared about her as much as he pretended, he would have found time during all those winter months to run up and see her. She knew very well that he had openly avowed his

name, and that all the world were now aware who Jim Forrest really was, and she had been not a little amused at the way her father and mother had taken the information.

"Dal it all!" exclaimed Bill Greyson when he heard it; "to think that I've had a son of the Squire's in my stable! I'm main sorry to think it. And that he should win the Two Thousand for Riddleton a few months after Riddleton had broke his father—it's like a dream. We ought all to be ashamed of ourselves that we didn't tell the Squire about Phaeton."

As for Mrs. Greyson, she completely changed her note, declared that she had always noticed something very superior about Forrest's manner; rallied Dollie about her flirtation; and would simper and say, "I darsay the young squire will give us a look in before long. We know of an attraction at Riddleton that's likely to bring him north, don't we, Dollie?"

"Don't put such rubbish into the girl's head," the trainer would roughly interpose on such occasions. "He may have taken up race-riding for a season, but men of Gerald Rockingham's blood don't mate with such as us."

And then Dollie would toss her head disdainfully as woman does when it is suggested the victim may break the toils; they never believe it, and draw the gyves tighter and tighter, despite the warning of worldly-wise sisters, until one day the fetters lie riven, and the captive is gone, never to be re-captured.

But as the months rolled by, and Gerald never appeared either at York or Riddleton, Dollie began to feel not a little uncomfortable. If this had been mere flirtation, incense gratifying to her girlish vanity, it would have been cause of doubt and dismay that her lover could stay away so long from her; but it was much more than that. Dollie knew, alas! that she had given her whole heart to Gerald Rockingham, and, if he deemed that a bauble not worth keeping, God help her! for she would need it sorely. Could her father

be right? Could Miss Rockingham be right? Was Gerald only amusing himself, as she had read and heard young men were wont to with women, more especially when they did not belong to their own station in life? And then Dollie would throw herself into the arm-chair near her casement, and, as she gazed across the broad undulating grassy expanse, the tears would well up into her eyes, and she would wonder whether the world really was so hollow and heartless as all that came to.

That "the world is hollow and their doll stuffed with sawdust" is a phrase that most young women go through in their early days.

Gerald had conceived a great idea, and was working up to it with all the steady persistency that misfortune had called forth in his character. He had heard from Writson that all chance of disposing of Cranley in the aggregate seemed hopeless, and that he should be compelled to lot it and dispose of it piecemeal. Now Gerald, thanks to the liberal presents he had received, in the first instance from Sir Marmaduke and his followers, and latterly from Lord Whitby, had no less than between two and three thousand pounds at his banker's. He worked hard and lived sparingly, and, except the money he sent to assist the *ménage* at St. Leonard's Place, spent little of his earnings. He was now making a very good income, and the idea had come to him to embark the bulk of his savings in some turf speculation; to go for one great *coup*, and, should that come off, with the proceeds to purchase Cranley; not the manor, of course, but simply the house and chase. The difficulty was—what should the plotted *coup* consist of? He had ridden several colts of Lord Whitby's this year, whose winning might be regarded as fairly certain; but then the prices laid against these at starting had been so short that it required to risk much more than he could afford to win the stake he wanted.

Gerald had for months been puzzling as to how the solution of his puzzle could be come by, but see it he couldn't,

and meanwhile he heard from Writson that the handbills would be out early in August, and the sale take place about the beginning of September. Gerald reflected sadly that there remained but a very short time to plan and execute the stroke he meditated. Stockbridge and the Newmarket July Meetings were gone and past, and though Goodwood loomed before him he could see nothing in the programme that seemed suitable to his purpose. Suddenly it struck Jim that he would take a few days' holiday, run up to York, and see his mother and sister and Dollie.

It was with a big jump of the heart that Dollie received the letter in which Gerald announced his intention of coming northwards. Ah, this would clear up all doubts! Let her but see Gerald, and she would speedily be assured as to whether he loved her still; but she did not want to see him at Riddleton, and that was where she was when she received his letter. She looked forward to the rather slavish adulation that she felt sure her mother would accord "Mr. Rockingham" with as much dismay as the blunt mistrust of her father. So Dollie made up her mind that she must abandon the sweet summer moorland breezes for the hot, dusty city of York, and once more take up her abode with Uncle Thomas in Coney Street.

Mrs. Greyson was not disposed to wrangle with her daughter according to her wont. Had not that young woman captured what, in the good lady's estimation, was a stag royal, and, although she knew enough of the science of deer-stalking to comprehend that—

Let the stricken deer go weep,

did not at all mean that he was "gathered," that these sorely-wounded ones often struggled on to the next forest and then took to themselves another mate, yet Mrs. Greyson, with half-closed eyes, kept on purring to herself over Dollie's approaching marriage with the heir of Cranley Chase. It mattered nothing that she knew, as all Yorkshire knew,

that Cranley Chase was for sale, and Gerald a ruined man riding races for a living. In her extreme satisfaction at her daughter marrying a man of gentle blood she ignored the sad story of the past few years, and chose to regard Gerald as holding the position his father had occupied when she first knew him.

Bill Greyson, on the contrary, took a very different view of his daughter's engagement. He admired Jim Forrest much; he recognised his great qualities as a horseman, and had heard from many of his Newmarket compatriots how steady he was in his life, and how steadfast in the pursuit of his new profession. As a brilliant jockey and a straight-going young fellow the old trainer would have held Jim Forrest a most eligible suitor for his daughter's hand, but, when it turned out that Jim Forrest was Gerald Rockingham, it was different. A wild, hot-blooded lot the Rockinghams!—ever reckless in their passions as regarded wine, women, or play; such was their reputation on the country side; and the late Squire had shown himself impregnated with the old Adam in his youth to the full as much as his ancestors. Greyson could hardly believe that, ruined or not ruined, Gerald Rockingham could mean to act fairly by his daughter. To a man of his birth the most obvious solution of his difficulties was a wealthy marriage. Groping dimly in the dark, the trainer had sense in his reasoning. In the state of transition in which we are all now living the money-grubbers, in their anxiety to turn butterflies, are only too keen to barter wealth for position; though how long we shall be before diamonds, a brown-fronted stone house, a silver-gilt dinner-service, and a pair of thousand-guinea carriage horses, constitute the *summum bonum* of existence, after the manner of our New York cousins, is a matter of conjecture. Birth and family are likely to count for much, while the dollar will be all-powerful in the days that lie before us.

Greyson honestly wanted to see no more of Jim Forrest save on a racecourse. He liked him in every respect except

as a suitor for his daughter, though he still felt a little uncomfortable that Alister Rockingham's son should ever have been a stable-boy of his. A life past in the chicanery of the turf—and Bill Greyson (to put it mildly) had been at all events mixed up with some ugly turf stories in his time—had not altogether blunted the veteran's ideas of right. Although he had honestly done him a good turn, he still harped upon the fact that the son of his old freehanded employer, Alister Rockingham, should have been employed by him in a menial capacity. On the other hand, the thing he loved best on earth was Dollie, and his face hardened at the bare idea that a man should meditate wrong to her. It would be far safer, he thought, that the two should see no more of each other for the present. "As for the wife," he muttered to himself, "she's good in the dairy, and keeps a rare hand on 'em in the house, but she's a feather-pated woman, and no judge whatever of weights when it comes to match-making."

Dollie had, perhaps, exercised a wise discretion in not meeting her lover at Riddleton. The judicious pilot does not take his frail bark between Scylla and Charybdis unless necessity compels; those dangers are better avoided if possible, and the girl felt that neither of her parents was likely to be quite what she wished to Gerald at present. Besides, she wanted to have him thoroughly to herself, and then she wondered whether she should see Miss Rockingham again, and whether Gerald meant to present her to his mother. She knew that he had announced his engagement to herself, but she had not come across Ellen since, and she was very anxious to meet that young lady under these altered circumstances.

If Dollie really entertained any doubts of her lover's constancy they were dispelled at once on Gerald's arrival at the drawing-room in Coney Street.

"Oh, Gerald!" she exclaimed, as she at length released herself from his passionate embrace, "what a time it is since I have seen you! Do you know how long it is, sir?"

"Yes, it is very nearly a year since I was last in York."

"And, if you are as fond of me as you pretend to be, how could you be so many months without coming near me?"

"Dangling at her apron-strings is not always the readiest way to win the girl you love. When there's man's work to be done 'tis no time for such sweet fooleries. I only did your own bidding, Dollie; and, now I am more successful than ever we hoped in the trade of your naming, surely you'd not have me give up 'silk,' and turn aside when I'm close to the top of the ladder."

"Of course not, Gerald. You know I wouldn't wish it for a moment, but you must expect a girl to pout a little at her lover's absence, even if she knows he is working hard for her sake. I don't suppose Rachel was very well satisfied with her father's arrangement, and, I have no doubt, felt quite as bad as Jacob did about it, when she found that she had, after all that waiting, to give way to her elder sister."

"Ah, well," said Gerald, laughing, "my servitude is not going to extend quite so long as that. I shall demand you of your parents before many months I trust. I have worked hard—aye, very hard!—and done better than I could have ever dreamt, and the end of it all is, darling, I have conceived a wilder dream than ever. I told you Cranley was in the market, and I am haunted with the idea of saving the house and park. Writson told me, and very sensibly, too, when last here, that it would be madness—that it would involve genteel pauperism—that most painful of all stages of poverty. But," continued the lad, springing to his feet, and pacing the room in his excitement, "at that time I had very little money at the bank. I was by no means sure of making a good income by my profession. Now it is different. I am prepared to risk my small capital to effect a grand *coup*, and, should that be successful, I could save Cranley; while with the income I now make we could all live there if we were content to do so quietly, though comfortably."

"Oh, Gerald! that would be glorious! But what is to be the great stake that we are to play for?"

"Ah! that's just where it is, Dollie. I don't know. I can't think of a *coup* to go for with what I call any reasonable chance of success."

"Stop, Gerald! Remember the horse that gave you your first great start—the horse that made you—the Dancing Master. Isn't there something to be done with him?"

"There might be," said Gerald, meditatively; "but, you see, I never ride for Sir Marmaduke now."

"But the horse is at Riddleton. They sent him back from Newmarket directly after Ascot. Sir Marmaduke, it seems, lost a lot of money over him in the Hunt Cup, and vowed he wasn't worth his keep. Father's got him back again."

"Well, it is possible there's a good race in him yet, if one could only catch him in the humour; but—even then I don't know when it's to be; and, Dollie, the time is so short. The Chase is to be sold in September."

"It's no use talking it over now," said the girl; "still, I've a presentiment that 'the Daneer' is our guardian angel, and he will take care of us yet. He doesn't mean to exert himself till you want him, Gerald: but don't forget he's at Riddleton, well, and—wicked old thing!—anxious for a job. How long are we to keep you with us?"

"A couple of days or so is all I can spare. I have to see Writson, and I must call in St. Leonard's Place; but I have no end of engagements, and must get back south towards the end of the week."

"I was afraid it must be so. No, Gerald, I'm not repining, and I know that it is all for your good that you should be so fully occupied; but a young woman likes to keep a sweetheart she only sees once a year a little longer with her, if possible."

"Nonsense, Dollie; don't be unreasonable!" exclaimed the young man, a little impatiently.

"I am not," replied the girl, softly. "I know it can't be; but I surely may regret that it is so."

Gerald's sole reply was of that description which is best left to the imagination. We can all recall what would have seemed appropriate under the circumstances, and human nature varies little with regard to these things.

"And now, Dollie," said young Rockingham, as the girl emerged from one of those unaccountable, but everyday, disappearances, which so troubled Bella Wilfer, "it's time I said good-bye. I've got to see Writson, and prepare my mother and sister to be introduced to you."

"Really, Gerald! Is Mrs. Rockingham anything like your sister? I shall feel so strange at meeting her."

"It would be much the same, whoever I brought her, I think. She would never consider any one quite good enough for her scapegrace son."

"I won't have you call yourself names," retorted Dollie, with a stamp of her pretty foot. "You know you are nothing of the kind. You never got into any row yet; and since—forgive me, Gerald, if I seem to speak hardly—you were left a beggar, you've honestly earned your own bread. Scapegrace, forsooth! I don't see much of that about you."

"Perhaps not," said Gerald, laughing, as he took up his hat; "but I must be off now; see Writson, and call in St. Leonard's Place. For the present, sweet, adieu!"

"God bless and keep thee, dearest," rejoined Dollie, as she kissed him; and then Gerald went out into the soft summer air, and wended his way towards Mr. Writson's.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A CALL IN ST. LEONARD'S PLACE.

GERALD's interview with Writson, although only what he expected, was nevertheless saddening. He had known for months that Cranley must go, but it was nevertheless a wrench to think that it was on the very verge now of passing

away from the family. His principal object was to delay the sale, but he could not quite muster up courage to confide to the kind-hearted old lawyer the visionary hope he indulged in. It was all very well to tell his warm-hearted sanguine *fiancée* that he contemplated some daring turf speculation that would enable him to win money enough to redeem the Chase, but he felt it was a different thing to put this very undigested scheme before a hard-headed practical man. The scheme was as yet utterly immatured, and to get a business man to take into serious consideration that you meditate embarking in some gambling speculation to raise money is a thing not to be thought of. Mr. Writson, conscious that he had already delayed the sale to the utmost extent of his ability, not from the remotest idea of averting the blow, but simply from the hope that a purchaser might yet be found to take the estate in the lump, naturally failed to fathom Gerald's reason for further deferring it. There was no hope of assistance or rescue from any quarter. The lawyer felt like a surgeon who has conclusively made up his mind that an operation is imperative, and that it is childish on the part of the patient to wish to put it off any longer.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Rockingham, that the creditors are not to be stayed further. I've exhausted the law's delay, and excuse me saying further postponement, even if possible, is unadvisable. Nobody can sympathise more sincerely with you under the circumstances than I do, but you must brace yourself up, sir, to meet the inevitable. A curious thing is that Pearson, I find, has been making inquiries about the Chase."

"Why, what can he want with it?" exclaimed Gerald. "After squeezing the orange all these years in conjunction with my precious cousin, he can't hanker after the rind."

"No, no, my dear sir," replied Writson, not a little astonished at Gerald's passionate outbreak, "it's not likely he wants it for himself, but he may have a commission to buy it. I shall very likely get at who it's for before the sale."

"By the way, has Mr. Elliston made any further proposition with regard to those acceptances of his?"

"No; and, until we put the screw on him from a social point of view, I suspect it's very unlikely he will. He, through Pearson, as I wrote you word, offered a thousand pounds, but we ought to get double that out of him. The whole sum it's useless to expect. Now I see by the papers that you ride a great deal for Lord Whitby. On what sort of footing do you stand with him?"

"I'm a great favourite of his. I have been lucky with his horses, and, though he treats me always as if I stood on the same platform as himself, I never forget that at present I am his jockey, and it has done me no harm with him. He is, as you perhaps know, proud and passionate; but he was an old friend of my father's, and stretched out his hand to me on that account."

"It strikes me that he might be just the man to put pressure on Mr. Elliston. If Lord Whitby chose to take up your case he is big enough to crush such as Mr. Elliston, and you owe it to Mrs. and Miss Rockingham to make him pay as much of his debt to your father as possible."

"I'll do it, Writson. I'll take the earliest opportunity of speaking to Lord Whitby on the subject. His dictum on all matters of honour is law in the racing world. Nobody ever ventures to question his decision."

"If that's so, I think it probable Mr. Elliston will come to terms sooner than have so awkward a story in circulation concerning him."

"We'll try it, at all events," said Gerald, rising. "There'll be little enough left for my mother and sister when all is done. There's nothing to warrant my not recovering that two thousand pounds, if I can. Cuthbert Elliston will be really our debtor for four thousand odd, even then."

"Quite so," replied Mr. Writson. "Do you make any stay in York?"

"No. I must get back to-morrow or the next day at furthest. Good-bye."

The lawyer shook his head thoughtfully as Gerald left the room. "Ah!" he muttered, "it's very sad. A fine young fellow, and the best blood in Yorkshire, riding races for a living, and his heritage coming to the hammer in September."

Gerald's appearance in St. Leonard's Place was welcomed with a low cry of pleasure from Mrs. Rockingham; indeed, both ladies were unfeignedly glad to see him. They had quite got over their first dismay upon learning the career he had embraced, and discovered that the world generally saw nothing at all disgraceful in it. Then, was he not an only son and brother whom they had not seen for nearly a twelve-month? It was small wonder they were disposed to make much of him.

"My dear boy, it's quite a treat to have you with us again," exclaimed Mrs. Rockingham. "Sit down and tell me who first put this extraordinary freak into your head. We are too thoroughly Yorkshire not to feel somewhat proud of your horsemanship. How on earth came you to think of it?"

"It was Dollie Greyson's idea; and without her help and encouragement I should never have carried it out. But, mother, dearest, to go back to first causes, Cuthbert Elliston made me take to the saddle. Surely you remember the cruel taunt he flung at me that day at Cranley when we learnt we were ruined. He recommended me to 'turn gamekeeper or pad-groom.' I had to do something, and, talking the matter over with Dollie, told her of Cuthbert's bitter gibe, and her woman's wit suggested 'turu jockey' Curiously enough, the first race I won was on his horse. I won, and he had me turned out of the stable."

"What disgraceful ingratitude!" exclaimed Ellen. "I wonder all the racing world didn't cry shame upon him."

"Never expect gratitude from Cuthbert," rejoined Gerald, with a bitter smile. "Our poor father lent him thousands which he never repaid, except with undying hatred for all of us."

"I always did think he was your poor father's undoing," murmured Mrs. Rockingham, sadly.

"He hasn't quite settled with me yet," rejoined Gerald. "I fancy he's repented already of his sneering advice. My riding cost him a good deal at Goodwood last year."

"And you like the life, Gerald?—it interests you?" inquired Mrs. Rockingham.

"Yes, it's a healthy life, if hard; and besides, I've done with the rough part of it. I had my turn of that in my novitiate at Riddleton. You know I was always fond of horses, and there's nothing more exciting than the final struggle for a big race, when you know that success depends principally upon your own nerve and judgment; that the calling on your horse for his supreme effort at the right moment means victory, while a couple of seconds too soon or too late is to lose the race."

"But your associates, Gerald; they must be so dreadful," said his sister.

"Some of them, of course, are pretty rough, but it's not necessary to see much of them, while others are very good fellows. They may not have quite the polish of society, but don't think they're uneducated. Many of the trainers, for instance, interest themselves in many things quite outside their profession."

Miss Rockingham had not quite got an answer to her insidious question. Since her brother had announced his firm intention of marrying Dollie Greyson, Ellen had become curious concerning Gerald's feminine acquaintance. Up to that time she had never given a passing thought to his marrying; but when a man, even though young, takes the idea of wanting a wife into his head, his sisters may naturally

regard a sister-in-law as imminent. Ellen had hoped her question would draw forth some allusion to Dollie. She wanted much to hear whether Gerald had seen her constantly all these months. She knew his letters were always dated from the south, and that Dollie's home was in Yorkshire, but he might have been in Yorkshire many times, though he had never visited St. Leonard's Place; and whether he was as "infatuated about that chit of a trainer's daughter as ever" was a thing Miss Rockingham much desired to know.

"But," she said, returning to the charge after a slight pause, "you used to be fond of ladies' society; surely you must miss that dreadfully in this life you have chosen?"

"A good many young fellows have to do without that at the outset of their career; and, though I fancy I am not quite the social pariah you picture me, still, I haven't time or inclination for that sort of thing. Remember, I have always this end before my eyes: I have adopted this profession as the pleasantest and easiest way in which I can make sufficient money to take my true position in the world; and further, that I have probably but a short time to do it in. I'm not a light-weight now, and it's only by constant exercise and rigid abstinence that I keep about eight stone. It's quite likely that in a few years I shall get too heavy to ride. Besides," concluded Gerald, with a smile, "you forget my book's made."

"Surely, surely, you will never commit such madness," said Ellen. "You are avowedly making money in an inferior position with which to resume your proper station as soon as possible. To marry Miss Greyson is to settle down in that class for life. Speak to him, mother—urge him, for all our sakes, to pause before he takes such an irrevocable step as that would be!"

"Indeed, my dear," said Mrs. Rockingham, "do think of what your sister says. It was a great trouble to us at first when we found out what you were doing, and it was only when Mr. Thorndyke explained to us that you were making

a deal of money—and people in these times didn't care how that was done, provided it was only honestly—that we got reconciled to it, and began to understand what you have just told us. But Gerald, dearest, to marry amongst these people is to live and die amongst them.”

“You can't understand,” interposed Gerald, roughly, “what Dollie's been to me. You can't suppose I'm going to throw over the girl I'm sincerely attached to, and to whose advice and assistance I owe my present position, because she's not in the Stud Book?”

“Your new associates begin to rather influence your conversation,” rejoined Ellen, haughtily.

“Don't talk rubbish!” said Gerald, sharply. “You might have heard my last remark in the smoking-room at Cranley, or in the precincts of any club in London. I'm not going to quarrel, but what can you know in reality of the world? Some knowledge of slang is and always was part of a gentleman's education. Why, when the late Lord Lytton wrote ‘Pelham’ it was brought against him that ‘his knowledge of flash was evidently purely superficial.’ Flash, my sister, is merely recondite slang or thieves' *argot*.”

“I can only say,” returned Ellen, by no means mollified at the sharpness with which her brother was asserting his position as head of the family, “there is a savour of the race-course about your conversation which I, at all events, am not accustomed to.”

Gerald bit his lip as the blood rushed into his face, and for a moment meditated an angry retort, but his new profession had schooled him severely in the disadvantage there is in loss of temper. He had not battled with equine infirmity of that nature without discovering the virtues of patience and “a calm sough.” After a little he replied quietly:

“Don't be unkind, Nell. I started, remember, smashed, broken—stock, lock, and barrel—as a Rockingham; that may be slang, but you understand it. Good! I have struck out

my own line, and made a reputation under another name; that the world have discovered Jim Forrest and Gerald Rockingham to be one is no fault of mine. If you and mother feel so ashamed of me I'll pursue my career under the name of my adoption, but don't suppose, under any circumstances, that I shall not marry Dollie Greyson; because I shall, hap what may "

Miss Rockingham was not a little staggered at her brother's firmness. She had recognised for some time the change that had come over him, but she had thought the united entreaties of his mother and herself would have at least made him waver in his determination to marry Dollie Greyson. But it was evident he was shaken not one iota on this point. They had no choice between whether they would abandon Gerald or receive his wife, and as head of the family he had surely some right to dictate. Ellen was a little puzzled how to reply; her pride forbade her to give in to this brother younger than herself, while her common sense told her he had the right to select the woman he would marry, and meant to exercise it."

"I had thought you would have paid some attention to my wishes in such respect, Gerald," said Mrs. Rockingham, feebly.

"My dearest mother, I hope I shall always listen to your wishes about anything, but this is a thing a man must decide for himself."

Despite this being a question of serious disquiet to them, the two ladies could not refrain from exchanging a slight smile at hearing this dark-faced stripling, who had so suddenly arrogated to himself man's estate, pronounce his opinion in so decided a fashion.

"As I said before," continued Gerald, "not only do I love her very dearly, but I owe my present position entirely to her clear practical common sense. You may think that it is very easy for a Rockingham to get his living in this

world. I can only say that, when it became necessary I should do it, I found Rockinghams considerably at a discount, and that except in my present profession I should be much puzzled how to earn thirty shillings a week."

"That is not exactly the question, Gerald. You have adopted this profession, and everybody knows it. It is much too late to say anything more about that, but we do urge you to pause before you take such an irrevocable step as getting married. Remember, you can abandon a profession but not a wife."

"I am not likely to change my determination," replied Gerald, quietly; "such training as I have gone through lately has strengthened my will as well as my muscles. An irresolute jockey would soon lose his riding. But if it will be any satisfaction to you to know that I don't mean marrying immediately you may have it. We can both afford to wait, and for the present I am bound to work hard at my profession; as I told you at my age it's impossible to say how long I may be able to continue it. The probability is I shall get too heavy in a few years. Mother, when may I bring my *fiancée* to see you?"

But, ere Mrs. Rockingham could answer, the door opened, and the servant announced "Mr. Thorndyke."

It was true that Ellen, after what had passed between them, had no cause to think that Mr. Thorndyke was in the least likely to intrude his advice upon Gerald; but she was decidedly non-plussed at the line John Thorndyke took up when, the first greetings over, she introduced him to her brother.

"How do you do, Mr. Rockingham?" said the genial rector. "I am delighted to make your acquaintance. We are all proud of you in Yorkshire, and so are your class all through England. It always does one good to see the gentleman hold his own with the professional. It shows there's grit left in us still."

“Thank you very much for your good opinion,” replied Gerald, laughing; “but remember, I don’t claim to be ‘a gentleman’—I ride purely as a professional.”

“I know,” replied Thorndyke; “but a gentleman you are, and I feel quite sure will never forfeit that position. You are paid, and so indirectly are most gentlemen riders. The one difference is, *they* all take seven pounds’ allowance as such, while you don’t.”

Gerald cast a triumphant look across at his sister; the name of John Thorndyke had cropped up not a little in that young lady’s letters of late. Judging from past experience, Gerald had no doubt that what he had begun irreverently to term “Ellen’s new pet parson” was of that extreme type that are merciless in their denunciations of the turf and all connected with it. Mr. Thorndyke’s speech was a pleasant surprise to him. As he rose to go, he said simply:—

“I’m glad to have met you, Mr. Thorndyke, and I hope to see you again before long. You must excuse my running away now; I have lots to do, and very little time to do it in. Good-bye, Ellen; good-bye, mother, dearest;” and, as he kissed her, Gerald whispered into her ear, “I shall bring Dollie to see you to-morrow morning.”

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

“WILL YOU BE MY WIFE?”

“I CONGRATULATE you on your son, Mrs. Rockingham,” said Mr. Thorndyke, as the door closed upon Gerald. “A fine, manly young fellow; and he has caught no taint of the profession he has embraced.”

“I beg your pardon,” interposed Ellen, a wee bit sharply. “His conversation was tolerably interlarded with horsey expressions before you came in. You only saw him for a minute or two, remember.”

"What does that matter?" rejoined the rector. "A large proportion of the young gentlemen of the present day talk horse, and usually in exact inversion to their knowledge of the subject. He would probably have done that had he remained at Cambridge."

It was too provoking. John Thorndyke seemed to be holding a brief for Gerald; but, ere Ellen could reply, Mrs. Rockingham cut into the conversation.

"Ah! you do not know the worst," she said; "he contemplates marrying amongst these people."

"He is too young to think of that; not but what if he marries the right woman it very often steadies a young fellow, and is the making of him; but, when there is such difference of class, it's a doubtful experiment. A half-educated woman is apt to jar upon a refined man after the first. She is perpetually offending him unwittingly."

"I knew, Mr. Thorndyke, you would never approve of such a *mésalliance*," exclaimed Ellen, triumphantly.

"Forgive me; I don't altogether say that. I only say it's a dangerous experiment. It depends so much upon what the girl is like."

The two ladies exchanged glances, which said, "Shall we tell him?" and then Mrs. Rockingham rose, and, saying to her daughter, "You had better tell Mr. Thorndyke, and then perhaps he wouldn't mind saying to Gerald what he has just said to us. You will excuse me, as I have one or two little things to attend to."

"Let us hope it is not so bad as you think it, Mrs. Rockingham," said the rector, as he opened the door for her. "Many girls in these days are educated what would have been thought far above their position forty years ago."

"You can't make a lady out of a trainer's daughter," retorted Mrs. Rockingham with no little asperity, as she swept from the apartment.

John Thorndyke bowed silently, and then, taking a chair, waited until it should please Ellen to be communicative.

“This is very sad, very distressing for us, is it not?” she said at length.

“Your brother is young, and as long as he is not actually married there is always considerable likelihood that he will change his mind,” replied the rector, vaguely.

“I am afraid not. You don’t know my brother—he is very obstinate when he has taken a thing into his head.”

“Very resolute in purpose is, I fancy, more the term. Weak characters are obstinate. Your brother’s career so far shows anything but weakness of character.”

“Call it what you will,” exclaimed Ellen, impatiently, “he is very fixed in his determination to marry this Dollie Greyson.”

John Thorndyke was almost betrayed into a long whistle “How very dull of me,” he thought, “not to have guessed the riddle at once.”

“Ah,” he said dreamily at last, “if he is honestly in love with Miss Greyson I think the probability is he will be—well, we’ll say obstinate.”

“Why, what do you know about her?” exclaimed Ellen in amazement.

“Very little. I have only seen her two or three times in her uncle’s shop, and she was such a pretty, graceful little girl that she attracted my attention, and I inquired who she was. Upon one occasion she served me with gloves or something, and in the few words that passed between us I recollect being much struck with her ladylike manner, so very superior to what one would have expected.”

Really, Mr. Thorndyke was too bad. He had been looked to to play in modified manner the part of Balaam, and, far from rebukes, he was dealing out nothing but approbation.

“Pray, have you ever seen the girl, Miss Rockingham?” inquired the rector, after a short pause.

“Yes,” replied Ellen; “and I am bound to confess she is a pretty little thing; but,” she added, with a shrug of her

shoulders, "she is the daughter of William Greyson, the trainer—at one time my father's servant."

"It is awkward; but you know I don't attach quite so much importance to these things as you do. I have lived a good bit in the world, for when I had charge of a large parish in London I had most excellent introductions, and saw a good deal of society. The hardest workers find the most time for play. It's all method and arrangement. Well, Miss Rockingham, the prosperous butter-merchant's son of to-day goes to college, and, let him only turn out a good fellow and his father die rich enough, mixes and marries in society."

"You don't mean to say," cried Ellen, "that you are advocating Gerald's marriage with this Miss Greyson?"

"No; certainly not. As I have said already, he is too young for one thing, nor do I know enough of the lady to be able to form an opinion. I only mean that from the little I have seen of her it is not nearly so bad as it sounds. You have not yet mastered the fusion of classes, which is one of the characteristics of the age."

"No; and I trust I never shall. I can't and won't believe it!" cried Ellen, passionately.

"Ah, well," said the rector, "you know the old proverb, 'None so blind,' &c. The representatives of the people might teach you that. Look at the present House of Commons—what an incongruous assembly it is! Men of birth, talent, and education sitting side by side with shopkeepers, &c., and the result is that one man of transcendent genius rules it with a rod of iron; makes it, when he chooses to take up that rod, cower like naughty children, and yield to his whims and caprices whatever they may be. Democracy is always dangerously near autocracy, and no man since the days of the Tudors was ever so absolutely ruler of England."

Ellen, however she disagreed with him, was always deeply interested when John Thorndyke talked in this way, and of late the girl had lost her self-reliance, and caught herself won-

dering whether it was not more likely that John Thorndyke, with all his knowledge of life, learning, and common sense, should be a better judge of these things than herself. Canon Durnford, too, although he laughingly repudiated sharing the rector of St. Margaret's extreme views, indirectly confirmed them to a certain extent.

Still, listening with interest to Mr. Thorndyke's Radical theories was a very different thing from welcoming Dollie Greyson as a sister.

But the rector had stopped talking, and after a slight pause broke into a low laugh, as he said :

“Ten thousand pardons, Miss Rockingham. I had no business to hold forth in that fashion, but once give a man a chance to ride his hobby, and it's sure to get away with him. Forgive me. Upon my word,” he continued, breaking into a peal of laughter, “I really thought I was on ‘the stump.’”

“No, Mr. Thorndyke, I like to hear you talk, little as I agree with you ; but we women, as a rule, are all Conservatives to the backbone. We dread our advanced sisters, and want neither votes nor seats in Parliament. I for one think the ‘Mrs. Jellabys’ of the world do no good in their generation, and may well leave such work to their male belongings.”

“Perhaps you are right. At all events, Radical as I am, that is my opinion also. But do you want my advice about your brother's engagement?”

“Ah, Mr. Thorndyke, you will speak to him and point out to him the mistake he is making, won't you?” cried Ellen.

“No, not at all. I wash my hands of it. I simply recommend you to make no further objection. Your brother, from what I see of him, is little likely to be swayed by any one in this matter. To oppose him means to quarrel with him, and, if anything, hurry his marriage. Rest contented then. The girl is pretty and ladylike. It is quite possible, when I know her, I shall congratulate you most heartily on your sister-in-law.”

A sudden thought flashed through Ellen's mind. Could Mr. Thorndyke contemplate some such marriage as Gerald. Was he advocating his own cause while pretending that he could not see anything much to be distressed about in her brother's engagement. A strange feeling of weariness, for which she herself could hardly account, came across her at this idea. She had never heard of Mr. Thorndyke being particular in his attentions to any lady in York; but he was just the man to be struck with any case of devotion and self-sacrifice amongst the poorer of his parishioners, and, if the maiden were comely, quite capable of asking her to share his home, with very little heed as to what the world would say of it.

"Would you make such a marriage yourself?" she asked, a little shyly, after a long pause.

"No," replied the rector, bluntly.

"Then, Mr. Thorndyke," exclaimed Ellen, "how can you support my brother in his preposterous folly?"

"I would not myself make such a marriage, because I hope to marry a woman of a very different station;" and the quiet, resolute tones in which the answer was given, and the straight glance of John Thorndyke's blue eyes into her own, told the girl at once who that woman was.

Ellen's heart gave a great jump; she recognised now why she had felt uneasy at the idea of John Thorndyke marrying, but, though she had conceived a great liking and respect for the rector, she honestly had never yet thought of him in the light of a possible lover. But she recovered her presence of mind in a few seconds, and replied.

"That sounds to me an additional reason why you should expostulate with my brother."

"Never mind your brother just now. I've a question to ask you on my own account. You've known me now over a twelvemonth, Miss Rockingham, and I have learnt in that time to love you very dearly. Will you be my wife? Stop!" he continued, seeing that she was about to interrupt him,

“don’t think that we differ very much in our views of life or religion. We both wish to do such good as may lie within our power, and tolerance should be a cardinal point in all creeds. If you love me there will speedily be little difference of opinion between us.”

Suddenly Ellen rose to her feet. “Mr. Thorndyke,” she said, “you have paid me the greatest compliment a man can pay a woman, and for that I thank you; but I have too great a regard and esteem for you to answer your question without some little consideration. You have taken me by surprise. I must have time to think whether I could be the wife I wish to be to you.”

“I am quite satisfied on that point,” rejoined Thorndyke, smiling; “only say you will be my wife and I am quite willing to chance your being a good one.”

“Please let me go now—I want to be alone and think,” exclaimed Ellen, resisting her lover’s attempt to detain her hand.

“It shall be as you will,” he replied, releasing her, “although I had hoped to have won a consent from your lips this morning, but, Ellen, you won’t keep me long in suspense?”

“No, you shall hear from me to-morrow morning without fail. For the present, good-bye,” and the rector felt that he was dismissed.

John Thorndyke did not feel much disturbed that he had failed to obtain a final answer that morning. He understood Miss Rockingham’s character too well. She would have been prompt enough if she had meant to say no. Most women when they debate about accepting a man rarely come to that conclusion. The girl with her somewhat rigid principles had unconsciously made it very difficult for herself to give Thorndyke a negative answer. She had great contempt for the littleness of coquetry, and there would have been a spice of that in keeping a straightforward, honest gentleman in suspense, if she had much doubt about what

her decision would be. The rector felt well satisfied with his morning's work as he strolled homewards, and his thoughts now drifted into some mundane reflections about his professional prospects. The first five years of his ministry had been passed in the quiet country rectory in which he had succeeded his father; but, when the almost simultaneous death of his mother and sister released him from keeping the home to which they were so wedded over their heads, he at once applied for metropolitan preferment, and was quickly installed in one of those large East-end parishes that often prove the stepping-stone to promotion. From thence he had been transferred to York at his own request, finding the sickly London atmosphere, after three years, began telling on a man so used to the fresh pure country air and a healthy country life as he had been.

John Thorndyke knew that he stood well with the chiefs of the Church, despite his somewhat peculiar views, and that he might count upon promotion in some shape before long, and he thought now would be a fitting time to jog their memories.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

POOR OLD DANCER.

THE two ladies in St. Leonard's Place were a little at cross purposes that night. Mrs. Rockingham was absorbed in the idea of receiving the bride of her son's election to-morrow morning; while Ellen, it need scarcely be said, with a lover of her own to say yea or nay to, could hardly be expected to keep a proposed sister-in-law in mind.

"It will be a terrible thing if we don't like her," murmured Mrs. Rockingham at length.

"I wonder what Gerald will say to it," responded Ellen, who had just awoke to the fact that her brother was head of

the family, and that it behoved her to acquaint him at once with her engagement.

"Yes, it will be very awkward," rejoined Mrs. Rockingham. "He is so masterful and hot-tempered, and yet if we don't like her it's absurd to pretend we do."

The termination of this last remark recalled Ellen from her dreamland just as she was about indignantly to protest against Mr. Thorndyke being called hot-tempered.

"Don't worry yourself about it before-hand, mamma. We are bound to accept this girl for Gerald's sake if he insists on marrying her. In the meantime, remember, I have seen Miss Greyson, and can assure you she is quite presentable, and rather pretty. Some people, I dare say, would admire her a good deal."

John Thorndyke was right: if Ellen loved him there was likely to be very little differing between them: the suddenness with which she had changed sides, and adopted his view with regard to Gerald's marriage, promised well for the answer she should give him to-morrow.

Mrs. Rockingham was a woman who had all her life been accustomed to lean upon some one. During her married life she had depended entirely upon her husband. At his death Gerald, while he stayed with them, had assumed the reins of government, no little to the astonishment of his self-reliant sister, but when he disappeared Ellen had, of course, stepped into his place. If Mrs. Rockingham was much astonished at Ellen's change of front, she nevertheless, after a long palaver, in which the opinion of John Thorndyke was freely quoted, perfectly acquiesced in it, and it was decided that Dollie should be welcomed as Gerald's chosen bride when she called. Further, Ellen confided to her mother that John Thorndyke had asked her to marry him, and that before she went to bed she meant to write and tell him she was his when it pleased him to take her; all which ended, as may be supposed, in a comfortable cry, and then the two ladies retired to rest thoroughly happy.

Mrs. and Miss Rockingham were not women to do things by halves, and, when Gerald and his *fiancée* arrived the next morning in St. Leonard's Place, they welcomed the latter with great cordiality. Dollie had come prepared, if she could, to make friends with Mrs. Rockingham and to maintain a polite neutrality with Ellen, but the latter had completely disarmed her by the warmth of her greeting. She seized the earliest opportunity of drawing Dollie a little apart, and then said:

"I want you to let bygones be bygones. You must forgive me if, in the first instance, I did not like the idea of having you for a sister-in-law. You must make allowances for the bitterness of having lost our old home, the home of our race for the last two hundred years and more. You must remember that the Rockinghams of Cranley were wont in their pride to think themselves mates for any in the land, and that a woman's first idea would be that Gerald should restore the fortunes of his house by marriage; and lastly, bear in mind, no sister ever thought any one good enough for an only brother."

All this said in Ellen's most winning tones was quite enough to break down the reserve in which Dollie had entrenched herself.

"Of course you didn't like it," she replied, shyly. "I always told him you wouldn't; but then, you see, I love him."

"Yes, and you must recollect, Dollie—I may call you so, may I not?—that I did not know in those days all you had done for him. It was you put him in the way of earning his own living—not quite the one we should have chosen, perhaps; but he is such a success, no Yorkshire girl, who belonged to him, could help being proud of him."

"Yes, Miss Rockingham," cried the girl, as her eyes sparkled and her cheeks flushed with triumph, "he won the Two Thousand on the wickedest colt we ever had at Riddleton."

"He always could ride," replied Ellen, "and I am told that you are as good as he in the hunting-field?"

"I don't mind where I follow Gerald," observed the girl, naïvely

Miss Rockingham had some little difficulty in suppressing a smile as the thought flashed across her that Dollie had followed her brother to some purpose, but she wanted to become friends with her, and knew that was not a subject to jest upon at present.

"You pass a good deal of your time in York, do you not?" inquired Ellen.

"I have done so. You see I am passionately fond of music, and I also wanted to learn a good many things that girls of my station don't usually aspire to. I have been at York chiefly for masters. At Riddleton," she continued, laughing merrily, "we only teach riding and the management of the dairy."

Neither Gerald nor Miss Greyson made the slightest allusion to his novitiate. It was not that he cared much about its being known. It was all past and gone now, but he thought it would pain his mother and sister to learn that he had passed some little time as a stable-boy. At present they never questioned but what he had been requested as a particular favour to ride in the Two Thousand Guineas in consequence of his prowess with the York and Ainstey, and then, at Dollie's suggestion, had adopted it as a profession. After a short talk with Gerald, Mrs. Rockingham, who has been agreeably surprised at the appearance of her future daughter-in-law, comes across to improve her acquaintance with Dollie, and thereby occasions a change of partners.

"Well, Nell," said Gerald, as his sister took a chair beside him, "I hope you will get on with my wife."

"I think so," replied Ellen; "at all events we have one point in common, to wit, our love for your precious self. But, Gerald, how long are you going to stay with us?"

"I must leave this afternoon. I have some business at

Riddleton I want to see old Greyson about, and then I must hurry back to Newmarket. I had great trouble to snatch these two days as it was. I should soon lose my business if I didn't attend to it, and you know it is the height of the racing season."

"I have something to tell you before you go," said Miss Rockingham, speaking slowly. "Yesterday, after you left, Mr. Thorndyke asked me to marry him. I asked for a few hours to think over my answer, and this morning I wrote to say I would."

"And now you come to me as head of the family, Nell, to ask my consent," exclaimed Gerald, laughing. "My dear sister, you have my heartiest congratulations. Thorndyke seems, from the little I have seen of him, a right good sort, and, at all events, he won't be ashamed of his brother-in-law Jim Forrest."

"Ah, Gerald," replied Ellen, as she yielded both her hands to his brotherly clasp, "you must make allowances for my old-fashioned prejudices. If I have overcome in some measure the creed in which I was brought up it is due to Mr. Thorndyke's teaching."

"Ah! you've learnt at last that the world can get on without Rockinghams. Yes; it's a sad thing to say in these days of high education, but I owe my present comfortable position and income not to Harrow and Cambridge, but to the accident of being of small stature, and to the teaching of old Western, the stud-groom at Cranley. By the way, I suppose you know the old place is to be sold in September?"

"No; of course I knew it must be, but had not heard when it was to take place. It really makes no difference; and yet somehow, Gerald, it will seem a wrench. You have no idea, I suppose, who will buy it?"

"No; we have failed to find a purchaser for it. To be disposed of by public auction is its fate now."

"You will be up here for the races this time, I suppose?" said Ellen, inquiringly.

"Yes. I made the mistake last year of being ashamed of my trade. I shall not fall into it again. As luck would have it, no harm was done; but it is much too risky an experiment to repeat. Besides, my *incognito* is at an end."

"Yes. And Gerald, dear, I'll own to very mixed feelings about it. I am half-proud, half-ashamed, and mamma is much the same—proud of your skill in the saddle, but a little sore that a Roekingham should be riding for hire."

"Nonsense, Nell; one might as well be a jockey as a cab-proprietor, and two or three of the nobility are in that line. But it's time I was going. Good-bye; good-bye, mother. You'll come to the station and see me off, Dollie?"

"It's nothing near as bad as I feared," said Mrs. Roekingham, as the door closed behind her son and his intended. "The girl is well enough, and would pass muster anywhere, but the connection is awkward."

"I don't suppose we shall be expected to see anything of Mr. William Greyson," replied Ellen, rather loftily. "We accept Gerald's wife, but we are not called upon to swallow her family. I told Gerald I was going to be married, mamma."

"And he?"

"Congratulated me as heartily as a man immersed in his own love affairs can be expected to do," replied Ellen.

Gerald was rather silent on his way to the station. He was turning over in his mind two rather important suggestions that had been made to him during his present flying visit to York. One was that of Mr. Writson, namely, that he should endeavour to get Lord Whitby to exercise some pressure on Cuthbert Elliston with regard to those promissory notes. That the concensus of public opinion was more likely to bring a man situated like Elliston to terms than legal measures the old lawyer knew well, to say nothing of there being no legal measures possible in this case. Gerald knew

he could depend upon Writson's opinion, and, though his distaste for invoking foreign aid in his family affairs was such that had it only concerned himself he would have undoubtedly let the whole matter go, still he recognised that it behoved him to recover as much of the money as he could for his mother and sister. Secondly, there was Dollie's idea that a big race might be got out of "the Dancer," and it was to sound Bill Greyson on that point that he was now going to Riddleton.

"Good-bye, dearest," he said, as the train glided into the station. "You will see me again in a few weeks, for I mean to gratify your curiosity and ride at York this time."

"Mind you do, and win," replied Dollie, with a bright little nod of adieu. "Give father and mother my love, and don't forget to write."

As he sped on his way to Riddleton Gerald's mind was busy revolving what *coup* on earth it was possible to pull off with the Dancing Master. He believed implicitly that when the brute chose to try he was a very great horse—that he not only had a tremendous turn of speed, but, what rarely goes with it, great lasting capabilities. Gerald was bent upon playing for a big stake, and it grew upon him more and more as he travelled on that this queer-tempered iron-grey four-year-old was the instrument for his purpose. It was quite true that no more dangerous horse to place your money on could be found, as Sir Marmaduke had discovered to his cost in the Hunt Cup at Ascot; and Gerald was quite aware of what the Dancing Master had once or twice done with Fibroch and Bushranger on the training-ground to justify that plunging on the baronet's part. Had the horse in the race run within 7lb. of his home performance he would have won easily; but then, again, that little infirmity that wrecks both men and horses intervened, and his "beastly temper" led to his discomfiture. Still, this was just the animal to "go for the gloves" on. What may be termed his criminal record was so bad that he was sure to be allotted a very

light weight in any handicap he might be now entered for, and the Ring would be bound to field strongly against a horse whose irritable temperament was so well known, and who had already on more than one occasion proved so staunch a friend to them. The immediate question naturally was, What did Bill Greyson mean to do with the Dancing Master, now, according to Dollie, returned to him to do with as he willed? It was not likely the trainer would give up all hope concerning him as yet, more especially when it was borne in mind that he had been an amazingly profitable horse to Mr. Bill Greyson, and might yet, with luck and judicious handling, be sold to considerable advantage.

Gerald was a little non-plussed on arriving at the Moor Farm with his reception. The trainer seemed very pleased to see him, but welcomed him hat in hand, and as "Mr. Rockingham."

"Very glad, indeed, to see you, sir. The late Squire was a liberal master to me at one time, and it was not altogether my fault that he took his horses away from Riddleton. But what will you do, Mr. Rockingham? Will you walk through the stables first, and then have some lunch, or will you have something to eat at once?"

"Thanks, Greyson. I am very much pressed for time, so, if you will let me, I'll have something to eat first, and I can talk to you at the same time. Dollie tells me you have got the Dancer back upon your hands."

"Yes; Sir Marmaduke got such a sickener over the Hunt Cup that he sent the horse back the following week," replied the trainer, sententiously. "It was enough to make him; but you rode in the race, sir, and know all about it."

"Yes, and I did think it was going to be his day. I thought Blackton had us all safe, when the Dancer suddenly shut up, without rhyme or reason."

"Yes; he'll never get a better chance, and it's hopeless to train him. He's been a good horse to me, but I don't think any one else will ever get a turn out of him."

"What do you mean to do with him?" inquired Gerald.

"Sell him the very first opportunity, and with a view to that I shall enter him for the two big back-end handicaps. After his exhibition at Ascot he is safe to be thrown in, and he may catch somebody's fancy who wants to go for a big stake without very much risk. As I said before, he's been a good horse to me, but *I* don't trust him again."

Curious—"a big stake without very much risk!" Was not this the very chance Gerald was seeking? and two very good judges had foreseen that the Dancing Master was a possible medium through which that desirable consummation might be achieved. Sir Marmaduke, in the first instance, had hit off what Gerald began to believe was the necessary combination when he had leased the horse with a view to winning the Leger; to wit, that the Dancing Master would run honest in his (Gerald's) hands, and no one else's. Now Greyson saw a great opportunity in either the Cesarewitch or Cambridgeshire, but, strange to say, that it was essential Gerald should ride did not seem to have occurred to the astute trainer. But the idea was rapidly spreading through Gerald's mind that this might really be so, and that in his hands the horse might once more do his best, and carry off another big race.

"There are worse speculations about than that," he said, at length, "and it won't signify however light the weight they put upon him. He has got such a name as a bad-tempered coward that nothing but an enormous outlay of money will ever make him a strong favourite. The public have lost faith in him."

"And so has the owner and trainer," said Greyson, laughing. "Would you like to see him, sir?"

"Yes, by all means. I wonder whether he'll remember me?"

"I'll pound it he will. They've wonderful memories, have horses, and strongish likes and dislikes. I'd a line from Pipes," continued the trainer, as he led the way

towards the stables to the left of the house, "when he sent the Dancer back, 'Put up who you like on him,' he wrote, 'but never Blackton; the horse can't bear him, and has tried to savage him more than once. If Sir Marmaduke would give him another chance I should advise another jockey.'"

As Greyson opened the door of his box the Dancing Master turned his head, cast a sinister glance at the new comers as though recommending them to keep themselves to themselves as far as he was concerned, and then resumed some apparently elaborate researches in his manger. The horse certainly took no notice of Gerald, but no sooner did it hear his whisper of "Poor old Dancer," than it turned its head sharply with a short grunt of satisfaction, and unmistakably gazed wistfully towards the corner from which the voice had come.

"Go up to him, sir; only be careful," said the trainer.

Gerald walked boldly up to the horse's head, once more whispering "Poor old Dancer!" as he did so. The grey laid back his ears viciously as he approached, but upon hearing his voice the second time apparently changed his mind, and rubbed his black muzzle against his visitor's waistcoat when he reached his shoulder.

"Well, sir," said the trainer, no little astonished; "I never saw him do that before to any one. Did he ever to you when you looked after him?"

"Yes, but only now and then. Still, he always seemed to take notice when I talked to him; though," added Gerald, laughing, "he didn't take much heed of what I said. He looks well."

"He's always well," returned Greyson; "never been sick nor sorry yet. I wish some of the others had his constitution. Now, here's Caterham," he exclaimed, as he threw open the door of an adjoining box, "a clipper, but as delicate a horse as ever I trained. We couldn't make anything of him last autumn; but he's wonderfully well now, and should do your cousin, Mr. Elliston, a rare turn whenever his time comes."

"Which will be about October, I suppose," said Gerald.

"I can't say, sir. Mr. Elliston is not communicative, nor are his orders open secrets even when I get them."

Gerald took the hint, and asked no further questions. He strolled carelessly through the stables, and honestly complimented the trainer upon the blooming condition of more than one of his charges. As they walked back to the house he said carelessly, "I suppose you'll keep the Dancer in strong work?"

"I shall train him so that he can easily be wound up for either Cesarewitch or Cambridgeshire, if any one wants to buy him with a view to those handicaps; but as my horse he'll start for neither."

"Well, Greyson, thanks very much. The nags, take 'em all round, look wonderfully well; and now I must be off. I shall hardly catch the train as it is."

"Oh, yes, you will, sir. My trap's at the door, and you've a good five minutes in hand."

"Good-bye. Kind regards to Mrs. Greyson, and say how sorry I am to have missed her," said Gerald, as he leaped into the dog-cart.

CHAPTER XL.

CRANLEY GOES TO THE HAMMER.

THE weeks slipped by since Gerald's return to Newmarket, and as yet he had no opportunity of unburdening himself to Lord Whitby, and ascertaining whether the peer would exercise such social pressure as lay at his command to compel Cuthbert Elliston to restore some of the money which he had borrowed from Alister Rockingham. Lord Whitby, indeed, had only attended one race-meeting of late, and that was Goodwood, where Gerald had no opportunity of speaking to him in private. York Races had come round again, and

Lord Whitby had announced his intention of being there to see his horses run, and then perhaps Gerald might find the desired opportunity. The peer was in rare good humour; the year had been a procession of triumphs so far. The Great Yorkshire Stakes and sundry other valuable prizes at Doncaster and Newmarket were apparently at his mercy, and he bid fair to be returned at the head of the poll when the return of the principal winners of the season should be issued. York race-week, too, was to see the irrevocable sale of Cranley, and Gerald reflected ruefully that, though he had thought his *coup* out, and was quite determined to play for it, yet, if it came off, it would be too late to save the Chase. He had resolved, if he could, to try and win the Cambridgeshire with the Dancing Master, arguing that no weight there was any probability of his being allotted could prevent him if only the horse chose to do his best. Still, this experiment could not be tried till the end of October, and the lands of the Rockinghams were to come to the hammer in August. Gerald could see no possibility of saving the home of his ancestors. Men to advance money on the possibility of a big race coming off in one's favour are not to be met with; and that was about the sum total of security that Gerald could proffer for such a sum as would enable him to redeem Cranley Chase.

What Greyson might want for the Dancing Master was a thing that Gerald had never troubled himself to consider. It was no part of his scheme to buy the horse; he considered that such money as he could spare he should want for betting purposes, and that he would be able to induce the trainer to run him in consideration of being put on to win a comfortable stake. Gerald's idea was to back the horse very quietly and gradually as soon as betting began about the Cambridgeshire, but not to disclose his plan to Greyson until he had got the best part of the sum he meant to speculate with duly invested. The one flaw in his scheme was this: there was always the possibility of some one buying the Dancing

Master on the same speculation, and not caring particularly about "Jim Forrest's" riding for him, and it was quite part of Gerald's belief that nobody but himself could induce the horse to do his best. He was young, and who shall blame him if his head was just a little turned with success? Besides, had not his late employer, Sir Marmaduke, taken the same view of the case, and was not Sir Marmaduke accounted exceedingly wise among the younger generation of turfites?

Gerald went up to York, as in duty bound, with slightly mingled feelings. He had schooled himself to drop all false pride about his profession by this, but he did feel seriously anxious to acquit himself with distinction on what might be termed his own dunghill. Half the people on the Knavesmire, he was aware, would know that "Jim Forrest" was young Rockingham. Besides, would not the lady of his love be there to see, and it would never do to go down in the lists before all this goodly company. He was to ride, moreover, a red-hot favourite for the Yorkshire Stakes belonging to Lord Whitby, which the prophets declared to a man could not lose, and of the mendacious utterances of racing-seers Gerald by this had seen something. When the prophets are in unison there is more often trouble in store for the favourite than not. Then again, the sale of the Cranley estates was to take place that week, which would call additional attention to the last scion of the Rockinghams. He had, of course, quite made up his mind to all this, but it was nevertheless a little trying up in his "ain countree." However, he consoled himself with the reflection that everybody knew his story now, and, as for nerve; well, it had never failed him on a racecourse yet.

But Gerald was destined to hear a bit of news on his arrival at York that roused his ire not a little, and determined him to lose no time in bringing any pressure he could command to bear upon Cuthbert Elliston. He was having his dinner quietly in the coffee-room of Harker's Hotel when

his attention was attracted by hearing his own name mentioned by one of two individuals who were dining in the adjoining box.

"Yes," continued the speaker, "he was a rare sportsman was poor Squire Rockingham, and carried on the game merrily. He was a bold bettor, too—terrible bold, but the Ring outstayed him, as they always do when men dash it down as he did."

"Ah, all Cranley's to come to the hammer; there's a nice bit of grazing land. I mean to have it if it goes reasonable. Lot 34; here you are," and the speaker evidently referred to a sale-catalogue.

"I wonder who'll buy the Chase itself?" said the first speaker.

"Well, it's a bit of a secret, so you must not go gabbling it all about the city; but Lawyer Pearson always manages what law business I have. I consulted him about this bit of land I want to buy on Friday. Now, I chance to have a nephew in the office, and I often have a chat with him, and we got talking over the big Cranley sale. He told me they had three or four commissions to buy at a price, and one, he said, from the family."

"Ah, that'd be for the Chase. I'll be main glad if the Rockinghams can contrive to keep the Chase, and so'll many another."

"Oh, but this chap isn't a Rockingham exactly. He's one of the family, no doubt, but one the country side don't care much about. Yorkshire was no better for Cuthbert Elliston's winning the Leger, nor the poor squire either that ever I heard."

"No; I don't think folk will be much pleased at Mr. Elliston taking Alistar Rockingham's place."

"No; he's a cross-bred 'un, that Elliston. In the days the poor squire had winners, half Yorkshire was in the swim, but Mr. Elliston and Pearson always eat their own cake, and don't want any one to help them."

And then the speakers dismissed the Cranley sale from their conversation, and became immersed in elaborate calculations about weights and previous performances, all bearing more or less on the forthcoming week's racing.

Gerald drew his breath hard as he listened to the above. What! Cuthbert Elliston, his detested cousin, master of the Chase! Could Heaven look calmly down upon such iniquity? The man who had robbed his father sitting down in that much-loved home upon the proceeds of his frauds seemed to Gerald too monstrous. It mattered little who had the Chase, but any one rather than Cuthbert Elliston. Nothing would grate upon the feelings of him and his more than the idea of his cousin being installed at the Chase. If he could prevent that, he would at any cost, but the question was, could he? He was in no position to bid against Cuthbert for its possession, and, if his cousin could afford to buy it, who was to prevent him? He must see Writson to-morrow before the racing began, and even as the idea passed through his mind it was almost effaced by the rapid afterthought—what was the good of seeing Writson? Then he resolved to go to bed betimes, and see Lord Whitby the first thing next morning. If that nobleman chose to help him he might at all events prevent Elliston buying the Chase.

True to his resolution Gerald presented himself at the Black Swan the next morning, and sent up his name to Lord Whitby, with a request that he would see him for a few minutes. It rather annoyed Gerald to find that he attracted not a little attention among the servants and loungers, but he had made up his mind that must be. His story was, of course, public property now, and there were plenty of people in York who knew young Rockingham by sight, as well as many more who as racegoers were familiar with the features of Jim Forrest the jockey. However, a few minutes, and a waiter requests him to step upstairs, and ushers him into a sitting-room, where he finds Lord Whitby lounging over the *débris* of his breakfast.

"Sit down, Mr. Rockingham," said that nobleman, greeting him with that rather studied politeness which was one of his most marked attributes, until such time as circumstances stirred the tempest of his wrath, when his language was apt to be more forcible than polished. "I am afraid this sale must grate upon your feelings rather, but you have no doubt made up your mind to it as inevitable."

"Yes, my lord," replied Gerald, who never permitted himself to forget that he was speaking to his employer; "but I have heard a bit of news about it that has annoyed me much since I have been in York, and that is that my cousin, Cuthbert Elliston, contemplates buying my old home."

"I don't think the neighbourhood will welcome him very cordially as the successor of Alister Rockingham," replied Lord Whitby, contemptuously. "Your cousin is neither popular nor in very good odour amongst the *gentlemen* on the turf. I don't think much of Mr. Elliston; in fact, sir, I consider him a d——d scoundrel," concluded the peer, who detested the man, and had been rather outspoken concerning some of his more questionable practices.

"You can't think worse of him, my lord, than I do," replied Gerald. "He had a principal share in my father's ruin. Since I have been a jockey I have heard the story of Phaeton's Leger. I hold at the present moment a sheaf of his bills which my poor father had to meet representing several thousand pounds, and which he has the audacity to wish to compound for one, knowing how we have been left. I know, moreover, on more than one occasion that his manœuvring with the horses almost compromised my father's honour. Greyson told me the other day that it was not altogether his fault that my father left him. Not altogether, no! It was because he was weak enough to follow Cuthbert Elliston's orders."

"You're right, Rockingham, by Heaven you are!" exclaimed the peer, passionately. "That's the whole story of

your father's death and ruin, for it was the utter smash that broke his heart at last. No! Sooner than that d——d black-hearted thief should step into his shoes I'll buy the Chase myself. I don't want it; but," and here the speaker launched a mighty torrent of execrations which culminated in the peroration that "a white-livered skunk should never have it."

But at last the choleric nobleman calmed down, and made Gerald tell him all about the bills, and Cuthbert Elliston's conduct concerning them: even the bitter advice Elliston had tendered just after Alister Rockingham's funeral Lord Whitby managed to draw from the young fellow.

"Did he know who you were when you rode his horse in the Two Thousand last year?"

"No; but of course he recognised me as soon as I had won, and immediately gave orders that I was to be sent away from Riddleton. That is the sole guerdon I received at his hands for my success."

"Ah! I fancy he didn't profit much by it, and that probably he would have been just as well pleased if you hadn't won."

"At all events, he's repented once of his advice; when I beat him on Sir Marmaduke's horse for the Goodwood Stakes last year I know it was a costly race for him."

"Well, Rockingham, I'll do the best I can for you; but rest assured of one thing—Cuthbert Elliston shall never reign at Cranley. Just write me down your solicitor's address."

Gerald did so, and then thanked his lordship and departed gaily. It was the presage of a most successful week. He not only brought off the Great Yorkshire Stakes successfully for his employer, but never rode more brilliantly, and carried off some four or five minor stakes to boot. In one instance his triumph was notably due to his fine horsemanship.

But if it was a successful week for Gerald it was a most disastrous one for Elliston. Riddleton rather laid itself out

for handicaps, and had certainly flattered itself that some two or three of these races lay at its mercy when it saw the weights allotted to its representatives. But the stable was dead out of luck, and failed upon each occasion to achieve the expected victory. Even the cautious Sam Pearson looked glum as he saw the accumulation of figures on the debit scale of his betting-book, while, as for Elliston, who had looked forward to his week's winnings to materially assist him towards the purchase of the Chase, he could not control his ill-humour, which a communication from Pearson did not tend to mitigate.

Whether under the circumstances Elliston would have persisted in his mad design is open to question, but a visit Mr. Writson paid Pearson on the Wednesday morning effectually settled Mr. Elliston's pretensions in the matter. Writson said he was instructed by Lord Whitby to let Mr. Elliston know, through his solicitor, that as an old friend of Alister Rockingham's he intended to exercise all the social pressure he could bring to bear to wring from Elliston the sum he was still in honour indebted to the Rockingham family. "Further," continued Pearson, "I was clearly given to understand that if you attempted to bid for the Chase the story would be widely spread through York that you were buying the house with the money the squire had lent you, and that, moreover, you would have to encounter a pretty stiff opposition to boot."

"That means that old Whitby will bid against me, I suppose," interrupted Elliston, roughly. "It's useless to measure purses with him, or else it's little I care for his threats in the other direction."

But Cuthbert Elliston knew that he lied when he said this, and so did his chum and partner, Pearson. Elliston's reputation was too shady to risk a row with such a relentless and powerful opponent as Lord Whitby, and so it came to pass that when the Chase was brought to the hammer it pleased that wealthy and eccentric nobleman, in high good

humour with his York victories, to buy it, with no very clear idea of what he was going to do with it after he had got it.

CHAPTER XLI.

DOLLIE TURNS SCHOOLMISTRESS.

YORK had made the confederates take counsel as to how its disasters were to be retrieved. Elliston in particular had been a very heavy loser, dropping, indeed, a considerable portion of the winnings of the year. He was always a rather dashing bettor when in funds, and in his impatience to increase his capital had conducted his speculations on a more extensive scale than usual. He was, moreover, by no means so impassive in the hour of defeat as his more cautious partner, who usually bore victory or reverses with stoical indifference. It may be that he was conscious of a second string to his bow; and felt that, when he had failed to get the better of the bookmakers, his clients, at all events, were not likely to escape with their quill-feathers.

Elliston was of that type of man unbearable in either fortune:—exultant, hectoring, and blustering when in luck; morose, cynical, and sarcastic when the capricious goddess abandoned him. He was further embittered by another message he received from Mr. Writson, that, though in consideration of his reverses at York social pressure would not be immediately brought to bear upon him, yet, unless he made arrangements to pay two thousand in liquidation of those bills, the story of the transaction would be made public, and a hint was thrown out that he was at all events the owner of some valuable horses, which might be realised.

“That old brute, Whitby, is pulling the strings, of course, Sam. He must do his worst. I’ve not the money to spare

at present," snarled Elliston when Pearson delivered his message.

"Yes, and when you have got hold of a couple of thousand pounds I recommend you to come to terms. Whitby's a dangerous man for a turfite to quarrel with, and carries too many guns for you or me."

"Nonsense! Don't bother any more about the bills. You had far more of poor Alister's money, if the truth was told, than I had."

"That's got nothing to do with it. What I received was in the way of business. However, the bills are your affair, not mine; and you know best what the consequences will be to you if the story comes out. I should call it awkward if it threatened me, and should imagine it was worse for you," rejoined the attorney

"At all events, it isn't pressing just now; and, if our present luck lasts, I bid fair to be tolerably indifferent to public opinion before the year's out," replied Elliston.

The scene of the above conversation was that very room at the Salutation at Doncaster in which it had been decided to win the Leger two years before with Phaeton if possible. Elliston had won and lost a good deal of money since then, but probably was at the present moment very little richer than before that great *coup*. Money made by gambling is ever shifting as a quicksand, pouring from one pocket into another with feverish haste, as if bitten by the restlessness of those who win and lose it. After studying a sheet of paper intently for some minutes Elliston exclaimed petulantly:

"Except our confounded luck I can't see anything to beat Caterham in either handicap."

"No," returned Pearson, who was occupied in a similar study of the weights for the Cesarewitch and Cambridgeshire. "Seven stone twelve on a five-year-old that was good enough to win the Two Thousand at three can't be called excessive."

"No; and they've given him five pounds less in the long race, which shows that they think as we do that he's better at one mile than two. We must go over to Riddleton and have a talk with Greyson, and, if we only find the horse going on as well as he was the last time I was there, we'll slip him for the Cambridgeshire."

"Yes," said Pearson, "he ought to have a great chance; but here's another Two Thousand winner at the same weight:—Mr. Greyson's Dancing Master, four-year-old, seven twelve."

"Bah! a brute with a temper like that it don't much matter how little they put upon his back; besides, we can always give Greyson orders not to run him," rejoined Elliston. "Sir Marmaduke's done with him, you know."

"True! his temper's quite gone, I fancy. Still, he's always just the beggar to upset calculations. There ought to be a law prohibiting the running of such horses as him, for the protection of owners and backers. However, I don't suppose Greyson has any serious intention of starting him."

"No; however, I shall veto that if he has. We'll go over to Riddleton on Monday and have a confab with him about it, and then trust me to slowly work the commission. We ought to take thirty thousand out of the Ring easily over this."

"Providing it comes off; but remember we're not the only people who have laid themselves out for the same little game," rejoined cautious Sam Pearson. "There's a good many just as sanguine as ourselves, and with cards up their sleeve that we know nothing about."

Still, the more the confederates talked over the thing the firmer they became in their conviction that they had a very big chance of winning the Cambridgeshire; and before their conference broke up it had been decided between them that, unless Greyson showed good cause why they should not run Caterham for that race, run they would, and give the Ring reason to remember it if it came off.

But, as Pearson had suggested, there were many inquisitive eyes scanning that mystical problem, the weights for the Autumn Handicaps, and it was with a grin of intense satisfaction that Elliston noted, ere the Doncaster Meeting terminated, a strong disposition on the part of the public to back Caterham for the Cesarewitch.

"We'll let 'em burn their fingers pretty badly over that, Sam," said that astute and unscrupulous tactician; "and then they'll leave chestnuts of ours alone for the future, and let us take 'em out of the fire for ourselves."

Betting, in the days of our story, commenced on the two great Autumn Handicaps at Newmarket considerably earlier than it does at present, and two people noted with no little interest that the Dancing Master was ever and again backed at long shots for the Cambridgeshire. Those two were Mr. Greyson and his daughter. The trainer had no conception who it was that kept snapping an odd thousand to twenty or thousand to thirty about the horse, but he sent him sedulously along in his work, on the speculation that, whoever it might be, he would be sure to have a start for his money, at all events, if only for hedging purposes. He did not in the least imagine it was the public. An uncertain-tempered brute like the Dancing Master was not at all the kind of animal that commends itself to the noble army of backers. Mr. Bill Greyson thought it much more likely that a syndicate of bookmakers had plotted to make a good thing out of the horse by working him in the betting-market like any other "corner" on the Stock Exchange, and in that case they would sooner or later inevitably have to make terms with him. He did not in the least believe that money was to be won by backing the grey, but he did think that he was the sort of horse that men skilful in the manipulation of the betting-market might frighten the public into rushing on at the last. He confided none of these imaginings to either his wife or daughter, but adhered faithfully to a pet maxim of his own, for which Bill Greyson had often been laughed at

by his brother craftmasters: "Say nothing, but send 'em along."

Dollie, on the contrary, watched the Cambridgeshire betting with the keenest interest. Gerald had told her nothing further about his plans, but she felt sure that it was on his behalf that the money was being so cautiously dribbled on to the Dancing Master. Always an early riser, she resumed an old habit rather laid aside of late years—the cantering up with her father in the early morning to see the horses at their work, and her heart swelled as she saw the strong resolute fashion in which the grey, when in the humour, galloped over his companions. She felt sure that if he liked he could, in racing parlance, make Caterham, Phaeton, and all the rest, "lie down," and she begged her father again and again to let her give the Dancing Master a gallop. Bill Greyson had seen what his daughter could do with a fractious colt many a time. There wasn't a lad about the place who didn't look upon Miss Dollie as a wonder in the saddle; while, as for Joe Butters, he firmly believed Miss Dollie could do more with a bad-tempered colt than any jockey at Newmarket;—but the trainer was not to be cajoled. He regarded the Dancing Master as really about the worst-tempered horse it had ever been his ill-luck to deal with, and he had no idea of permitting his only child to risk her bones on the back of the unmannerly brute.

But it so chanced business called Mr. Greyson away for a couple of nights, and he was consequently compelled to hand over his charges to the superintendence of Joe Butters, his very steady and capable lieutenant, and now came Dollie's opportunity. From her childhood she had domineered over Butters, who simply regarded her as a phenomenon. He thought there was nobody like her—that there was nothing she couldn't do if she tried, but he did rather demur when she told him the day after her father's departure that she would give the Dancer his gallop that morning. It was not for one moment that he doubted her ability to do so; if a

horse could be ridden at all of course Miss Dollie could ride it; but he had a shrewd idea that old Greyson had forbidden this thing, and he knew that the stern old trainer was little likely to overlook any infraction of orders. Butters was too rigid a disciplinarian to dream of deviating from ordinary routine or the few commands left for his guidance, but Greyson had never thought it worth while to place a prohibition upon his daughter's whim.

Joe, in short, was taken desperately aback at Dollie's request, and at last parried it with "Oh, I say Miss Dollie, you know he don't allow any one not dñly insured to get upon that horse. Bless you, Miss, we keep him chiefly to work off the useless stable-boys with. If you notice there's one missing every now and then. Well, we've put him on the Dancer, and after a few minutes there's generally nothing left for us to do but pick up the pieces and cart 'em away for Christian burial."

"Yes, Joe, I know," rejoined Dollie, with preternatural gravity, although her eyes were dancing with fun; "but what I don't know, and must and will know, is—where you do bury them?"

"It's a profound secret, and you'll never tell, promise?" replied Butters with a conscious twinkle in his eye. "We put 'em away at the back of the furzes; but you know, Miss Dollie, there'd be an awful row if we had to carry you there. No, leave the Dancer alone. We all know you can ride anything, but he isn't a lady's horse, Miss Dollie—he isn't indeed."

"Don't be a fool, Joe. You've seen me ride a good many that the veriest horse-coper out would hesitate to describe as that. Tell them to bring the Dancer up here at once, and shift my saddle."

"What a horse-coper would say, or what a wilful woman will do," thought Mr. Butters, "are a couple of equivalent conundrums a deal beyond me, but there's one thing I can

swear to, and that is giving Miss Dollie her own way is only a matter of time as far as I am concerned. They most on 'em gets round me, but she—— Here, bring the Dancer up here; slip off, Matthews, and shift these saddles. Miss Dollie is going to give him a gallop this morning. If she can't make him go we may turn him up. It's not likely any of *you* can."

The Dancing Master eyed Dollie's short grey habit with undoubted distrust; and, active as the girl was, and clever as Butters and his myrmidons were in the handling of thoroughbreds, it was some little trouble to place her on his back; but Dollie had unbounded pluck, and, muttering between her white little teeth, "Gerald rode the horse for my sake, and I'll do as much for him," she promptly responded to Butters's "Now, Miss Dollie," and, taking advantage of a slight lull in the grey's vagaries, was dropped into the saddle light as a bird. For a moment the Dancer seemed stupefied by her audacity, a precious moment promptly utilised by the girl in settling herself in her seat, and then, as if in answer to her cheery "let his head go," the horse gave two tremendous plunges, and shook his head angrily. But Dollie remained immovable, her hands just played upon the bit lightly as they might have done upon a piano, while she spoke to the offender in soothing tones of expostulation. The grey seemed to consider the case, shook his head once more angrily, gave a vicious lash out that would have been bad for any one within reach, and then jumped off up the gallop at a rattling pace. Infirmities of temper the horse had, no doubt, but he was not cursed with that equine vice "a hard mouth," and, if Dollie's hands were light, they had little wrists strong as steel behind them. Before they had gone half-a-mile she felt she had the Dancer well under control; and then the girl, with flushed face and sparkling eyes, took a steady pull at him, and sent him soberly along at three-quarter speed, talking to and encouraging him all

the while; and when in the last quarter of a mile she shook him up and finished at racing-speed the horse responded to her call, and ran home strong as a lion.

A perfect ovation from Butters and the stable-boys met Dollie as she pulled up. They had hold of the Dancer's head, and Butters jumped the girl off his back as quickly as possible.

"That's the best gallop he's done since we got him back from Newmarket, Miss Dollie," exclaimed that worthy, inexpressibly relieved to find that no harm had come of the girl's freak. "I never saw him go better."

"Go better, Joc! he's the sweetest galloper I was ever on. Smooth and easy as an express train; and what a stride! I don't believe we ever had such a horse at Riddleton before. Temper!—he's not a bad-tempered one. I'll tell you the secret of the Dancer: he has a very delicate mouth. In any other hands but mine that bit and bridoon would madden him. I'll ride him his gallops in future. Don't look frightened, Joc; but tell some one to bring up my hack. I'll make it all right with my father to-night."

And then Dollie rode home to breakfast with a strong conviction that she had done a good morning's work, and had something to tell her lover worth his knowing, if it was for him that the Dancer was so quietly but persistently backed for the Cambridgeshire.

The girl had every reason to be pleased with her prospects. She had stayed on in York for a fortnight or so after Gerald had left it, and during that time had seen a great deal of her future mother and sister-in-law, and to her great delight had got on wonderfully well with them. She owed this in some measure to herself, but she was quite aware that she was also indebted considerably to the fearless, outspoken rector of St. Margaret's. John Thorndyke had been much taken with the girl. That he should study closely one about to be nearly connected with himself was only natural; and he was much pleased not only to find her so well-

educated and lady-like, but to discover that she possessed a large fund of practical common sense besides. Thorndyke stood up for the girl; he argued that Gerald might have done much worse; that we were fast merging into a democracy; and that the distinctions of rank would soon be things of the past; that she was a good, sensible, lady-like young woman, and would probably be an excellent wife to Gerald; and "that," added the rector, "counts for much in a man's career."

That John Thorndyke's opinions were likely to carry much weight in St. Leonard's Place we know well, and the consequence was both Mrs. Rockingham and Ellen viewed the girl, so to speak, through John Thorndyke's spectacles, and made much of Dollie accordingly.

"Let us only win this big stake over the Cambridgeshire—and Gerald, my dear, I'll have the Dancer completely sobered down before you want him," said Dollie to herself; "and save Cranley—No, I'm afraid we can't do that—it's gone—but your people will welcome me cordially amongst them all the same," and with these somewhat incoherent reflections Dollie finished her breakfast.

CHAPTER XLII.

STEALING A KISS.

WILLIAM GREYSON, when, on his return that evening he was informed by Dollie of her morning's feat, shook his head gravely, and vowed he would give Joe Butters a bit of his mind in the morning.

"Dash it!" he growled, "there's neither man, woman, nor boy I can trust about the place. The idea, you monkey, of your wanting to get on the Dancer. You knew I had forbidden it."

"Yes," said Dollie, demurely, "but you know when you tell a girl she musn't she always feels she must."

"Ah, well, you've done it, and thank God no harm's come of it. But, if Joe Butters thinks I am going to stand such laxity about stable discipline as that, he's much mistaken."

"Now, father, listen to me," said Dollie. "You must not scold Butters, because I've bullied him since I was a child, and he didn't know how to say no to your daughter when she was peremptory. He was as frightened as you could have been till I was safely off the horse again. But mind, I'm going to ride the Dancer every morning, and you'll see he'll go quiet enough with me."

The trainer was at first emphatic in his denunciation of Butters, and scoffed at the idea of ever letting his daughter get on the horse again; but after a cigar and a jorum of hot grog he promised that Butter's offending should be condoned; and as for Dollie riding the Dancing Master again, well, he would see about it.

Bill Greyson was very proud and fond of his daughter, and as a horsewoman he believed there had never been her like. He had implicit confidence in her ability to ride anything, but he had hesitated about permitting her to try her hand on such a very queer-tempered brute as the Dancer. Now she had done it, and successfully too, and as he wended his way to bed the trainer turned it over in his mind, and thought there might not be much risk after all in letting the girl see to-morrow morning what she could make of him.

From this out Dollie rode the grey regularly in his morning work, and it was very singular how very much more tractable the horse became in her hands than he had hitherto been. It must not be supposed that he never showed temper; there was always trouble, for instance, about mounting. Custom did not seem to reconcile him to the habit-skirt in the least, and he invariably entered an angry protest against its advent on his back. He would plunge and kick as of yore, and often require much coaxing to induce him to jump

off on his gallop, but he unmistakably went much better when started than he had ever done with any one else. He rarely attempted to either bolt or stop when Dollie was sending him along; and, though Greyson deemed there was still little reliance to be placed upon him on a racecourse, the trainer certainly did think that the horse was improving.

The beginning of October found Cuthbert Elliston in all his glory. Every morning brought him a line from Riddleton to say that Caterham could not be doing better, and there was every hope he would be as fit as hands could make him by the end of the month. The betting on the great handicaps was now getting heavy, and Elliston had already succeeded in backing his horse to win a very considerable stake. The public had left him the market very much to himself. Riddleton had the reputation amongst backers of being a very dangerous stable to meddle with; and though, in the first instance, they had nibbled a little at Caterham for the Cesarewitch, it was not long before it oozed out that his owner had not got a shilling on him for that race, and that his starting was very doubtful. Then the public, disgusted at the apparently certain loss of their investments, vowed they would have no more of Mr. Elliston's horses, and hoped devoutly he might never win another race. The sporting public is a little apt to talk in that wise when it has burnt its fingers, but it soon forgets, and before long again follows the will-o'-the-wisp that has deceived it already.

It was just at this time—when Cuthbert Elliston was positively revelling in “the potentiality of becoming rich,” once more dreaming of having broken the Ring—that oft-recurring dream which never is realised—that he received a curt epistle from his partner which a little disconcerted him.

“Caterham is going like great guns,” it said, “and on paper there's nothing to beat him, and, what is more, I feel sure that when we put him alongside our trying tackle he will quite confirm that opinion. I saw him last week, and

he has never looked so well since he won the Two Thousand. But who's backing the Dancing Master? Somebody undoubtedly keeps dribbling money on him, if the Tattersall quotations can be trusted. Old Bill swears he knows nothing about it, for I asked him. However, the horse looks wonderfully well, and does his work, I am told, by himself. He is in the sale-list, and Greyson has no intention, I believe, of even sending him to Newmarket, still, as I asked before, who is it persistently backs him?"

Elliston was not particularly put out by this letter, but he had been too long on the turf not to know that, when meditating such a *coup* as he did, no chance that could be conceived was unworthy of consideration. He thought it would be as well, perhaps, if he ran up to York, had a look at Caterham, and explained to Greyson that he should not sanction his starting the Dancing Master for the Cambridgeshire; but, before he started, it would be as well perhaps to ascertain whose money it was that went so frequently on the Dancing Master. Upon applying to Broughton, with whom he had had many business transactions on the subject, the great north-country bookmaker replied, "I hardly know, sir. A little man named Johnson took all my book for both races before the weights were out, and he occasionally backs him again, but the horse is avowedly for sale, and, I should think, not likely to run for either, much less run straight if he does. But he's in your own stable; you know what his temper is."

"And who is this Johnson?" inquired Elliston, without paying any attention to the latter part of Broughton's speech.

"Little man in a tall hat, sir. Bets chiefly on commission for a circle of small country clients, but I never knew him have the working of a *real* commission. His customers deal in fives and tens mostly. He's a straightforward little man enough, and I daresay he's parcelled out his Dancing Master money again before this."

All this was quite satisfactory to Elliston. He never dreamt of questioning the accuracy of the information because it chimed in exactly with his own view of the case, and in one sense the great northern bookmaker had told him the truth. Johnson and one or two of Johnson's colleagues were the backers of the Dancing Master; and it was perfectly true, as Broughton had said, that Johnson had taken the whole of his book upon both races about the horse at a very early period; but what Broughton did not tell Cuthbert Elliston was that he had an idea Johnson was this time cleverly working a very well authorised commission, and that he personally had taken more than one opportunity of what is termed "getting out," that is, backing the horse against which he had previously laid. In the first place, Broughton really did not know at whose inspiration Johnson was backing the Dancing Master, and, secondly, Cuthbert Elliston was a very unpopular man in the Ring. He was a hard man, who had punished them severely at times, and never given any of those whom he threatened to hit a hint to save themselves. As a rule the racing world generally rather chuckled when Cuddie Elliston was, to use their own expression, "warmed up," a feeling not at all confined to that section of the community, but prevalent amongst many little seaside *coteries*, who rejoice exceedingly when their neighbour is rumoured to have come to trouble over Egyptians or some similar popular delusion.

Mr. Elliston started for the North with a mind quite relieved as to the backers of the Dancing Master. He put it airily down to that great and long-suffering body, the British public, a public accustomed to pay dearly for its insufficient entertainment, accommodation, and its pastimes generally, and a public whose bounden duty it was, in Cuthbert Elliston's eyes, to lose money for the benefit of those who kept racehorses for their amusement. He did not pull up on this occasion at York, after his wont, and stay with his partner, but passed on straight to Riddleton,

where he had telegraphed to Greyson to have something at the railway station to meet him. The trainer was there himself, and as they drove up to the moor they naturally discussed the bearings of the Cambridgeshire together.

"The horse never was better," said Greyson, as they turned into the stable-yard. "I roughed him up this morning long before I got your telegram. Not quite a regular trial, but what we call a 'Yorkshire gallop,' and if, bar accident, you don't win the Cambridgeshire, I can only say there's a clipper in the background whose measure we've not got."

"No, I think it's good enough. Of course, you stand anything up to a hundred you like, taking the average of the commission," replied Elliston, "and the price is pretty good. I should like to see the horse at once," he continued, as he stepped out of the trap, "and then you shall give me some lunch."

"All right, sir!" said Greyson, "and I never showed you one with more pleasure. He's about fit to run now, but I know I can make him a bit better by the Houghton week."

The trainer might well look with pride into Elliston's face as the lad whipped the sheets off Caterham. He was as fine a specimen of a thoroughbred horse as ever was stripped. A rich, dark bay, standing at least sixteen one, and a rare good-looking horse. Old hypercritical turfites, rendered sceptical from losses over many a "beauty," would say, "Yes, that's just his weak point, he's a little too good-looking." I have heard infidels of this type talk in the same way about fashionable beauties, and pronounce them just a shade too handsome ever to mellow down for matrimony, and noticed as a fact that their plainer sisters have done better in that particular. Women, I suppose,

Who, born for the universe, made up their mind
Not to give to a spouse what was meant for mankind—

to paraphrase Goldsmith.

The Dancing Master was by no means so thoroughly hand-

some a horse, and yet his great ragged hips and low muscular thighs would have struck any judge of a racehorse; but then that little infirmity of a temper of his was well known; and no matter what his galloping points, or even capabilities, might be, that alone, amidst the crowds of people and the large fields of horses prevalent on English racecourses, was quite sufficient to forbid his being taken into much consideration. But Caterham was every inch a good-looking one. You could pick very few holes in the dashing winner of the Two Thousand, who, it was well known, had never been quite right or intended to win ever since. The public had great and reasonable doubts of his soundness, and also thoroughly well justified grounds for mistrusting his owners' intentions, but the horse, as Elliston, no mean judge, admitted at once, had never looked better. His coat shone like burnished copper, and his eye looked clear, bright, and full as the evening star.

"He does you credit, Greyson, and if we are beat it won't be your fault. We've—partly from luck and partly from our clever tactics—thoroughly blinded the handicappers; they've given Phaeton 7lb. more than Caterham, and it should just be the other way I consider."

"Yes, sir, I should think this one could give Phaeton quite 7lb.; there was something like that between them this morning."

"It's good enough, bar accidents, and I have secured a very good jockey. Now, what about that grey of yours? Somebody's backing him, and he might be dangerous if he did take it into his head."

"Well, sir, it's no money of mine that goes on him, nor any belief of mine that he will ever win another race. He's in the sale list, and unless somebody buys him he won't even go to Newmarket."

"I needn't bother my head, then, any more about him," rejoined Elliston; "but come in and give me some lunch now. I'm in a hurry to get back to town."

The trainer quickly led the way back to the quaint, old-fashioned dining-room on the ground floor, with its low windows looking out on the grass-plot and the wide-spreading chestnut-tree that decked its centre. The windows were half-open, letting in the scent of the creepers that covered the house and the flowers that still lingered in the borders surrounding it, for it was one of those soft autumns which made men loth to leave their summer haunts and return to the busy hum of cities.

Hap what may, there's never lack of provender for either man or horse about a racing establishment; and Elliston, who was rather given to the pleasures of the table, washed down an excellent meal with a flask of dry champagne, and then proceeded to aid its digestion with the help of a Cabana and some curious old brown sherry, much in repute amongst the frequenters of Riddleton.

"You gallop that bad-tempered brute of yours by himself, Greyson, I hear?" remarked Elliston, as he leant back in his chair in lazy enjoyment of his cigar.

"Yes, sir; and, to tell you the truth, Dollie usually rides him."

"What! You don't mean to tell me you've put the girl on a devil like that? Begad, if anything happens to her, hanging's too good for you."

"She got on him first without my knowledge or consent. But she can do more with him now than any boy in the stable."

At this juncture a smart servant-girl entered the room, and, with a smile handing Greyson a note, intimated that the bearer was waiting.

The trainer glanced over it, and then, crushing it in his hand, said:

"I must ask you to excuse me, Mr. Elliston, a few minutes. The wife's away at York, but Dollie will give you your coffee, and tell you anything you want to know about the Dancer."

"All right! Mind I'm not late for my train," rejoined Elliston, who, having transacted his business and enjoyed his luncheon like the Sybarite he was, reflected that Dollie would be far pleasanter to talk to over his cigar than her father.

A minute or two later, and followed by a servant, bearing a tray with all the apparatus of coffee, Miss Dollie entered.

"God bless my soul, what a pretty girl you have grown!" exclaimed Elliston, honestly surprised to see how the girl's beauty had ripened within the last few months. "Upon my word, my dear, we must see about finding a husband for you."

"You're very good, Mr. Elliston," replied Dollie, with a coquettish toss of her head, "but pray don't trouble yourself."

"Ah! you think you can manage that for yourself, eh?" replied Elliston, laughing.

"I don't think it will be necessary to call in assistance, at all events. Will you take sugar?"

"No, thank you. But what have you been doing to yourself, child, to make yourself so much handsomer?"

"Riddleton air and morning gallops, I suppose," replied the girl; "but I flattered myself I wasn't so much amiss before."

"No more you were, Dollie," said Elliston, as he threw away the end of his cigar, and rose from his chair. "You've got lovely hair, child," and as he spoke he passed his hand caressingly over it.

"Don't, please, Mr. Elliston!" cried the girl, instinctively shrinking back, and glancing up at his flushed face with dismay.

"Pooh, Dollie, you little prude! I've stroked your hair many a time as a child, when it wasn't so well worth stroking as it is now, and kissed you too, my dear, when you were not quite so well worth kissing as you are now," and as he spoke Elliston suddenly passed his arm round the girl's waist and pressed his sherry-stained lips to hers.

Dollie gave a half cry, and tried fiercely to thrust back

the aggressor, but he was too strong for her, and, holding her fast in his arms, repeated the offence with the brutal taunt, "Bah, you little idiot, your mother would never have made so much fuss about such a trifle."

As he spoke the sash of the window was thrown quite up. A slight figure sprang through it, and as Elliston turned to confront the new comer he received a straight left-hander in the chest that sent him back reeling.

"Oh, Gerald, Gerald, what have you done? Oh, please, please," cried Dollic, bursting into tears.

"Done!" exclaimed Gerald, in tones hoarse with passion, "done my best to knock down the biggest blackguard in England."

Elliston recovered himself with a mighty effort. His eyes gleamed with fury, and in a low grating voice he said, "You young scoundrel; you shall pay for this," and gathering himself together was about to rush on his antagonist.

But quick as thought Gerald passed Dollie behind him, and, throwing himself into fighting attitude, coolly awaited the rush of his cousin. Despite his superior size, height, and it may be presumed strength, Elliston suddenly realised that Gerald's chastisement was not a thing to be lightly accomplished. He saw at a glance that Gerald could use his hands. Thrashing him off-hand was one thing, but a stand-up fight was rather too undignified a proceeding at his age. Mastering his rage with a mighty effort, he exclaimed with a bitter sneer, "I congratulate you upon having so thoroughly acquired the habits of the class to which you belong, but gentlemen don't settle their differences in that fashion. Adieu, Miss Dollie. I daresay Forrest will find you by no means so coy with your kisses."

Gerald started, and was about to rush upon his cousin, but Dollie's hand upon his arm restrained him. He made no further answer than a contemptuous smile, while Elliston, after one glance to gauge the effects of his Parthian dart, stalked angrily from the room.

CHAPTER XLIII.

GOING FOR THE GLOVES.

ELLISTON left the house in search of the trap that was to convey him to the station literally swelling with indignation. This whelp of a boy seemed to confront him at every turn, and, what was worse, to checkmate him. From winning a big stake to the buying of Cranley, or snatching a kiss from Dollie Greyson, Gerald was always in his way. He felt there was nothing he would shrink from to work woe to his cousin, but Gerald was under the wing of Lord Whitby, and had achieved a position besides of his own that made him tolerably unassailable. Still, as he bade the trainer good-bye, he bethought him of a thorn to plant in Gerald's breast.

"Good-bye, Greyson," he said, "we shall win the Cambridgeshire, never fear, and winter in clover; but I've got one hint to give you. I see that young Rockingham is hanging round here after your daughter. That will do her no good. He was as wild as a hawk at college, and, like all his stock, is pretty unscrupulous with regard to women. A hint's enough to a man of your experience. Lock up your daughter, and hunt that young reprobate off the premises. You'll find him kissing her in the dining-room now, most likely," and before Greyson could reply Elliston jumped into the trap and was gone.

This was too much in accord with his own ideas not to make the trainer very uncomfortable. He did not even know that Gerald was at Riddleton, the note that summoned him from the dining-room relating only to the delivery of some forage. As he strolled back to the house across the grass-plot he mused rather grimly over the unfortunate entanglement of his daughter; and at last, happening to raise his eyes, saw through the open window the tableau Elliston had so deftly painted to him. There was Gerald in

most lover-like attitude with his arm round Dollie's waist and unmistakably kissing her.

This was too much for Greyson's equanimity. He dashed into the house, and entered the dining-room abruptly. Dollie made an attempt to extricate herself from her lover's embrace on seeing him, but Gerald held her fast.

"Mr. Rockingham," said the trainer, "I'll have none of this. I told you so as Jim Forrest, and I tell you so much more strongly now I know who you are. I'll not have my girl's head turned with your nonsense. She may be but a giddy little simpleton, but she is my daughter, and all I have got."

"Oh, father, hear me!" cried Dollie, for there was a touch of pathos in the hard old man's voice that went to her heart. "No, let me go to him, Gerald," but her lover still held her tight.

"Go to your room at once," rejoined Greyson, "and you, sir, don't attempt to detain her. I will send you to the station, but never let me catch you on Riddleton Moor again."

Dollie at last twisted herself out of her lover's embrace, and was about to rush across to her father when Gerald caught her wrist and exclaimed, "Stay! Mr. Greyson, there's no harm in kissing the girl you are pledged to marry. I have promised to take Dollie for my wife if you will give her to me."

"Mighty pretty words," rejoined the trainer, roughly, "such as young gentlemen of your class think it no harm to pour into the ears of foolish girls beneath them. Do you suppose for one instant that your own people would allow you to make such a marriage as that?"

"I know in a few months I shall be of age, and that nobody will be able to prevent me. Besides, Dollie will tell you that she has already been welcomed as my future wife by my mother and sister."

"It's true, father, it is indeed; they were most kind."

"And do you mean to tell me that they knew that Dollie was the daughter of Bill Greyson, the trainer?"

"Certainly, I do," replied Gerald; "just as much as they know that I am Jim Forrest, the jockey."

For a minute or two Greyson stood silently glancing from one to the other of them. He could not quite take in the reality of the situation. It seemed to him almost absurd to talk of a Rockingham marrying a daughter of his; and yet, surely, if there were nothing in it, Mrs. Rockingham would hardly have welcomed Dollie, as the girl declared she had. Pooh! they were young in the ways of the world; and because Mrs. Rockingham had been good-natured and kind to his little girl, and perhaps smiled at their philandering, they had both jumped to the conclusion that she would be pleased to receive her as a daughter-in-law. And then Elliston's parting admonition recurred to him. Yes; that was much more likely that young Rockingham was just amusing himself with a flirtation.

"Mr. Greyson, will you give me Dollie?" said Gerald, after some length, and still holding the girl's hand.

"I think not. I'll take some little time to consider; but I don't believe any good would come of such a marriage. Mr. Elliston warned me just before he started against letting you make a fool of my girl."

"Cuthbert Elliston!" exclaimed Gerald; "the scoundrel! What has he to do with it?"

"He's one of your family anyhow. It was he told me you were here, and that I should find you both billing and cooing in the parlour."

"And did he tell you that I nearly knocked him down for his impudent behaviour to your daughter?" interposed Gerald, hotly.

"What!" exclaimed Greyson, sharply.

"Indeed," said Dollie, "Mr. Elliston was very rude to me, and I was very glad when Gerald jumped in at the window."

"I only know," said Gerald, "I found my precious cousin—who has a wife of his own, remember—making the most violent love to Dollie, very much to her annoyance; and that I did my best to knock him down—and all but succeeded."

"Ah! you struck him?" said Greyson, between his set teeth; "that was well done," he added, after a pause.

"And now, Mr. Greyson, will you give me Dollie?" said Gerald.

"Go to your room, girl, and leave Mr. Rockingham and me to talk matters over. You needn't be afraid, child; we're not going to quarrel."

Dollie made no reply; but, with a bright smile at her lover, tripped out of the dining-room.

"Now, Greyson," said Gerald, "I have come here for a good long talk with you about more things than one. First, I am in thorough earnest about wishing to marry your daughter. I have taken her to see my mother and sister; they both like her, and will be very glad to welcome her into the family, of which, remember, I am now the head. As for my rascally cousin, he ruined my father, and would do the same by me if he could. He has nothing to do with our concerns further than to pay us some, at all events, of what he owes us. I can't marry Dollie yet for some months, at all events; I think it best to stick to my profession closely for a little longer, so you will have time to consider the subject. That's finished for the present. Of course we shall correspond; it's no use your saying we shan't, because in these days that never prevents young people, who are fond of one another, doing it—promotes duplicity, nothing more. Now, is the Dancer still yours?"

"Yes, worse luck; and likely to continue so. I had hopes when I saw they were backing him a bit for the Cambridgeshire that somebody might be disposed to make a bid of some sort; but nobody speaks

"And he's quite well?"

"Well? Of course he is. Ask Dollie—she gallops him every morning. The beggar never looked better."

"You don't mean to say you put her up on that queer-tempered animal?" exclaimed Gerald.

"No," replied Greyson, "but she took advantage of my absence to put herself up; and there's no nonsense about it, he goes better with her than he ever did with any one, not barring yourself, Mr. Rockingham."

"Good! Now, Greyson, the Cambridgeshire betting about the Dancing Master, as far as it has gone, represents pretty well my commission. Somebody, of course, has been clever enough to risk a little about the thing on spec, with the haziest intentions as to what he was speculating in. Some one always does. But I have got on the Dancer to win a rattling stake as it is, and, if I find him what I hope, can easily get a good bit more at a longish price. You mean to run him, of course. With seven stone twelve the race is a gift to him if he chooses."

"Just so, *if he chooses*, but he never does choose. No, he's not worth sending to Newmarket, Mr. Rockingham; and what's more, we've got another here we think quite good enough to serve our turn."

"Yes, I know. Cuthbert has backed Caterham to win him a lot of money, but my impression is that the Dancer is a tremendous horse when he runs kind. He'd beat Caterham far enough at even weights, though the latter's a good horse, too. You've not promised he shan't go to Newmarket, have you?"

"No, certainly not. I told Mr. Elliston I had no intention of sending him there; but he knows the horse is for sale, and if any one buys him I can't be answerable for what his new owner may think fit to do."

"But still he's your horse. You're quite within your right in beating Mr. Elliston, if you can, for a good stake like the Cambridgeshire."

"I tell you, sir, he's no good. With his temper, he'd

never try in a big field such as there will be for that race."

"Recollect," replied Gerald, impressively, "the only time the Dancer ever won I rode him. Recollect how he recognised my voice the other day in the stable. I don't pretend my riding had anything to do with his winning, but simply the horse knew me, and did for me what he has done for nobody else."

"There may be something in that," rejoined the trainer, musingly; "but hang it, I don't like interfering with stable tactics."

"Then," said Gerald, "I ask you to choose between my interests and Cuthbert Elliston's, between the interests of the man who insulted your daughter and the interests of the man who hopes to marry ——"

Greyson started as if stung.

"Yes," he rejoined, in stern, resolute tones, "that settles it. If I can beat him fairly for the Cambridgeshire, by —— I will. Mr. Rockingham, play your game as you like. You can depend upon me, bar accidents, to hand you over the Dancing Master when the saddling-bell rings as fit as hands can make him, with no other orders than win if you can. There's my hand, sir."

The two exchanged hand-grips, and then the trainer said:

"Tell me it's not flying in the face of your own people, and will do you no harm with them, and, after the Cambridgeshire, if you ask me for Dollie again, Mr. Rockingham, I'll give her you, win or lose."

"That's a bargain, Mr. Greyson," said Gerald, as they once more shook hands.

"And now I'll send Dollie to you. She can tell you more about the Dancer than I can; but I do believe this, that he's a good deal better than Caterham *if* he will try," and with this dubious assurance the trainer left the room.

Dollie was not very far off, and re-appeared speedily at her father's summons.

"It's all right, darling," cried Gerald, joyously, as he clasped the girl in his arms and kissed her. "Your father's behaved like a trump. I'm to marry you after the Cambridgeshire; and the Dancer's to win it; and I'm going to land money enough to buy back Cranley Chase. I'm pretty sure Whitby don't really want it, and would let *me* have it for what he gave for it. I'm a great favourite with the old lord."

"Oh, Gerald! if you could! How proud I should feel then that it was at my recommendation you turned joekey!"

"You may feel proud of that as it is, sweet," replied her lover; "but your father tells me you've been riding the Dancer, and that he goes tolerably quiet with you."

"Yes: he kicks and plunges of course, and he sulks a bit with me at starting; but he goes very well with me when we are fairly off; and, Gerald, I never was on the back of such a galloper!"

"Do you find him pull much?"

"No; and that's been the mistake with him all along. He has a rather delicate mouth, and likes to have his head. If you pull at him with that heavy bit and bridoon-bridle they put on him he gets mad, and then you know neither man nor horse ever feels pain. I have gone on riding him in that way, but then you know how light a woman's hand is. Gerald, dear, take my advice, and put a plain snaffle on him for the Cambridgeshire."

"I daresay you're right, Dollie. Your father, though he hadn't quite mastered the theory, had always an inkling of it. 'Leave him alone,' were his orders before the Two Thousand; 'he may win the race himself, but you won't make him.' As a stable-boy, I rode him strictly according to orders, only too anxious no fault should be found with me in that respect; as a joekey, I might have had ideas of my own on the subject; and, hard as I always try to carry out my employer's instructions, there are times when to stick to them seems to be throwing the race away, and sometimes actually is. Neither owner, trainer, nor any one else can

foresee the turns-up in a race, nor the way in which it will be run. It may be run all false, and a clever jockey, who knows his business, sees his one chance is to throw all orders to the wind and rely on his own judgment. You are told to wait, but know amongst your antagonists there's one with a terrible turn of speed, and there's nothing will make the running. Your only chance is to do it yourself, and stand the abuse if you're unsuccessful. But forgive me, Dollie; I am delivering quite a sermon on my own profession; it's a profession I love, and can't help getting a little enthusiastic about."

"And do you think I'm not proud of the name you've made in it? I believe I think more of Jim Forrest, if possible, than Gerald Rockingham."

"And Gerald's not jealous of Jim," replied her lover, laughing. "And now, dearest, it's time I was off; but mird, Dollie, you must be there to see me win the Cambridgeshire. Tell your father it must be so. I shan't see you again till we meet at Newmarket, and then, hey! for winning the last big handicap of the season and Cranley Chase."

"Here's the Cambridgeshire and Cranley Chase!" cried Dollie, snatching a wine-glass from the luncheon-table and waving it over her head. "*Vive la guerre!* and success to the sky-blue and white."

"Good-bye, dearest," said Gerald, as he once more clasped his *fiancée* in his arms; "and God grant your toast may prove true. Take care of the Dancer for me; and mind you are there in the Houghton week."

One more kiss, and Gerald Rockingham was gone; and Dollie, dropping into a chair, was soon lost in the sweetest of dreamy reveries.

CHAPTER XLIV

AT THE RUTLAND ARMS.

THE Monday of the Houghton Meeting has come at last, and the week gives promise of capital sport. Never had the betting on the Cambridgeshire been heavier, and never perhaps had the early backers experienced more discomfitures. Favourite after favourite was sent to the right about, either from having failed to stand a preparation, or in consequence of owners finding themselves so forestalled by the rapacity of the public that it was impossible to obtain a fair and reasonable price about their horses. This naturally gave fresh courage to the bookmakers, and the big handicap could boast now of a very elastic market.

The principal feature on the Heath on Monday between the intervals of racing was a strong desire to back the Dancing Master, a thing that astonished Messrs. Elliston and Pearson not a little. They could not make out exactly who was doing it. Mr. Johnson, no doubt, was picking up the long odds at every favourable opportunity, but there were more Richmonds in the field than one; and, before the racing finished and the crowd flocked back to spruce little Newmarket, the Dancing Master had been brought from the forty-to-one division to something like over half the price. All sorts of rumours were current about him. It was reported that there had been a great trial at Riddleton, and that Caterham, one of the prominent favourites, had been well beaten by his stable-companion. That the horse was not known to have arrived was nothing. Bill Greyson and his string were not expected till the afternoon, and it was quite likely might not arrive till the next day, the Cambridgeshire being set for Wednesday's card. Ere they reached the Rutland, Elliston and his partner had learnt, upon unimpeachable authority, that Greyson had arrived,

and brought the Dancing Master with him as well as Caterham.

Over their dinner that evening the two indulged in various conjectures as to the meaning of this freak of old Bill's. The most probable solution in their eyes was that he had sold the horse, and that his new owner had thrown the commission into the market. Well, they agreed it was not likely to signify much.

"Some new young one anxious to distinguish himself by winning a big race first time of asking," said Elliston. "He's likely to pay dear for his whistle; what with the money the Ring take out of him over it, and the price old Greyson has probably put that worthless brute into him at, if he don't have an expensive race on Wednesday I'm much mistaken."

"Greyson, of course, will be up to see us about breakfast-time to-morrow. It's no use speculating about who he's made a fool of over the Dancing Master; let's go down to the Rooms and see what's doing."

"All right!" replied Elliston, as he lit a fresh cigar, "come along."

Business at the Rooms was in a languid state when the parties left them. A good many of the leading bookmakers were there discussing the events of the day, but none of the leading dons of the racing-world had as yet put in an appearance. The former were apparently no little exercised in their minds about the mysterious apparition of the Dancing Master in the betting-market. It was now known that the horse had arrived, but in whose interest he was running, and who was to ride him, were matters that seemed to trouble the minds of the leading magnates of the Ring no little. Elliston was at once hailed with proffers of odds against the Dancing Master, but the refusal of both himself and Pearson to invest on his chance seemed once more to puzzle the very suspicious members of Tattersall's—sensitive

ever from long experience to dynamite mines of this nature exploded upon them at the last moment. True, he had shown himself thoroughly unreliable on account of temper for at least two years; but he had proved himself, and very unexpectedly too, a great horse upon one occasion, and the brethren of the mystic circle were bound to keep such facts within their memories, or break.

But soon after ten Sir Marmaduke, accompanied by Farington and two other of his friends, strolled in, and the listlessness that had rather characterised the proceedings was put aside. So far there had been very little business doing—nothing except desultory talk had been the outcome of the evening. But the baronet had startled the Ring too often not to make his advent a matter of interest. They knew very well that he had experienced a most disastrous year, and that his own stable was under one of those periodical blights that such establishments suffer from. But Sir Marmaduke was rather catholic in his taste for speculation, and by no means confined his operations to backing his own horses. Heavy loser though he undoubtedly was on the season, yet he had enjoyed gleams of sunshine, and had made the very Ring open its eyes with the daring plunges he had made on some of Lord Whitby's "good things." When he laid five to one in thousands *on* a colt of that nobleman's for the New Stakes at Ascot, the racing-world marvelled; but when he followed it up by betting seven thousand to four *on* the winner of the Gold Cup, the old hands shook their heads, and said that, though in these two instances fortune had favoured him, yet a Nemesis would surely overtake one who wooed the fickle goddess so rashly.

"Dancing Master for the Cambridgeshire?" he said quietly to one of the boldest of the bookmaking fraternity.

"Twenty to one, Sir Marmaduke. Do you want it to money?" was the reply.

"I'll take it in thousands," rejoined the baronet.

"Can't do it, Sir Marmaduke. I haven't so much money left to lay. Shall I put down twenty monkeys? Ten thousand to five hundred is a nice bet."

The baronet nodded, and almost immediately afterwards the languid voice of Captain Farrington was heard inquiring after the Dancing Master, and he, too, was accommodated upon similar terms. It was speedily apparent that the little coterie of whom Sir Marmaduke was the guiding star were all intent on backing this horse, and the odds shortened rapidly. Still the fielders continued to lay the lessening price. They recalled how these very men had put faith in the Dancing Master at Ascot, and how he had proved but a broken reed to them then. However, sheer weight of money tells in the betting-ring just as it does on the Stock Exchange, and "the bulls" upon this occasion brought the Dancing Master to ten to one taken freely before they closed the operations.

"What do you think of all this?" said Pearson, as the pair strolled home to the Rutland.

"Think?" answered Elliston, irritably; "I think that Sir Marmaduke means to have another shy with the Dancing Master; that though he sent him back to Riddleton he never gave up his control of the horse; and that all Bill Greyson's story about his being in the sale-list was gammon, or at all events premature. I shall give that old villain a pretty stiff corner of my mind to-morrow."

"I wonder who rides?" said Pearson.

"Oh! Blackton, no doubt. He's Sir Marmaduke's first jockey, and will probably declare three or four pounds over weight. But he didn't do much with the horse in the Hunt Cup."

"No," said Pearson, as he rang for a brandy and seltzer, that peaceful haven, the Rutland, being at length attained; "but I've an unpleasant presentiment that cursed grey will trouble us somehow in the big race on Wednesday. He'll

knock our horse down, or run away from the lot, as he did in the Guineas two years ago. By the way, I hope young Rockingham won't have the mount."

"No fear. He quarrelled with Sir Marmaduke about something, and hasn't worn his colours the last year or more. Just the young beggar's luck. He got Whitby's riding instead. Left the sinking ship just in time to join another that had both royals and stunsails set."

"And the lad knows how to follow his luck," said Pearson, moodily. "If by any fluke that boy's on the Dancing Master I shall cover my money by backing him for a little."

"You always did funk," sneered Elliston; "but I don't think, unless the horse is, as I guess, still Sir Marmaduke's, old Greyson will send him to the post after all."

"He will," rejoined Pearson. "He daren't bring him to Newmarket and not run him. Now I'm off to bed. Good-night."

The attorney was up and out on the Heath betimes to see and hear what was doing, and astonished his partner on his return not a little with the intelligence that Jim Forrest was to ride the Dancing Master.

"At least, that's what I heard this morning, and everybody's puzzled to know who's pulling the strings. He was out this morning and looked fit as fiddles, but showed a deal of temper till Forrest got on him. He did a nice canter with him, and went fairly kind. Greyson's coming up to see us about ten."

"And Caterham?"

"Went a good strong gallop, and looks fit to run for a kingdom. Greyson says he never was better."

They were still dawdling over their cigars and the card of the day when the trainer was announced, and at once proceeded to give due account of his charges, all of whom he pronounced emphatically thoroughly fit to meet their engagements, especially the Cambridgeshire crack, Caterham.

"Though," he added, "they tell me, in consequence of what took place at the Rooms last night, that old grey of mine looks like passing him in the betting."

"Oh, I want to speak to you about that," said Elliston, sharply. "Has Sir Marmaduke anything to do with the horse now?"

"Nothing whatever, sir."

"Then what the devil did you send that satanic-tempered brute here for, after telling me you didn't intend to?"

"I changed my mind. My horse happens to be very well, and I don't see why I shouldn't have a cut in for a stake worth over two thousand," replied Greyson, doggedly. "You've no call to complain about Caterham, he's just about as fit as I know how to make him. It's not very likely the Dancer *will* beat you, but I warn you he can *if he likes*."

"And pray may I ask whether it is from your inspiration that Sir Marmaduke and his friends are plunging on the Dancer in this manner?"

"No, sir; I honestly don't know what has induced Sir Marmaduke and his friends to back the horse in the way I hear they did last night. But it was from no hint of mine. He'll run, but I don't much believe in him."

"And suppose I tell you that I particularly wish that he should not run. What then?"

"I shall be sorry to disoblige you, Mr. Elliston, but I've brought him to Newmarket, and he'll run all the same," replied Greyson, quietly.

"A plant, by Heaven!" cried Elliston, fiercely. "My horse, I presume, has been sacrificed to yours."

"Nothing of the sort, sir," replied Greyson. "Yours is as well as ever he was in his life. The two have never been put together, and it's sheer guess-work on my part that the grey's the best."

"And is that young whelp, Forrest, to ride the Dancer?" snarled Elliston.

"Mr. Rockingham is to ride my horse. I don't know

about his being a young whelp, or a young anything else," replied Greyson pretty sharply. "I do know that he's about the best jockey of the day, and that if he gets well away, and the Dancer runs kind, he'll spreadeagle his field to-morrow."

"With those views we may say, I think, Pearson, that he trains no more for us?"

"No," said the attorney, with a malicious grin; "and, if the Dancing Master does win the Cambridgeshire, perhaps Mr. Greyson will have cause to wish he had yielded to wiser counsels."

"I've not forgotten that I'm your debtor, Mr. Pearson, but I'll take my chance. I daresay, if it comes to the worst, I shall find friends to assist me in meeting my liabilities. Good morning, gentlemen."

"A case of mutiny, by Jove!" exclaimed Elliston, as the door closed behind the trainer.

"It's your own fault in great measure," said Pearson, savagely. "If you hadn't given Greyson that cursed grey colt we should have been masters of the situation."

"And intend to be so still. But do you honestly think there's a chance of the Dancing Master beating us?"

"Yes," replied Pearson, "I do. I wouldn't back the horse, he's so thoroughly uncertain; but I agree with Greyson, that he's a great horse when he likes, probably the best we ever had at Riddleton. It's an old axiom—never overlook an animal's best form. I never saw the Two Thousand easier won, and, remember, subsequent running showed that he had a good field behind him. I wish heartily that he wasn't going to start."

As he spoke the door opened softly, and Dollie, who was in search of her father, peeped in.

"We never had such a chance," continued the attorney, "and it would be too provoking, after having got on to win such a big stake so cleverly, to have the prize snatched from our grasp by that perverse-tempered brute. I can't imagine

what has made Greyson so contumacious. There's something behind I don't understand."

Cuthbert Elliston did not think it necessary to enlighten his partner about that little *contretemps* up at Riddleton, though he had no doubt that his folly there had caused this combination against him. Dollie had no doubt told her father what had occurred, and Gerald had persuaded the trainer to repay the affront put on his daughter in this fashion.

"That blackguard young villain," he muttered, "planned this little scheme for my discomfiture."

"It doesn't much matter what's the cause, Sam," he said, at last. "If Greyson won't take orders he must take the consequences. I'll take care the Dancing Master don't start. Listen to me," and he lowered his voice, so that Dollie could no longer catch what he was saying.

But the girl had heard quite enough. Closing the door noiselessly behind her, she sped down the passage like a lapwing, with a view to carrying this piece of intelligence as quickly to her lover as might be.

CHAPTER XLV

GETTING AT THE FAVOURITE.

DOLLIE hurried away from the Rutland with Cuthbert Elliston's words ringing in her ears, "I'll take care the Dancing Master doesn't start," and she felt certain that he would, if possible, make good his word. She had caught but a fragment of their conversation, but it was quite enough to make her thoroughly understand the situation. It was evident from Pearson's speech that the two men hoped to win a very large stake over Caterham, and equally clear that they were afraid of the Dancing Master upsetting their

plans, and were much disconcerted by his unexpected appearance at Newmarket. She knew her father was to see them that morning—indeed, had expected to find him with them. From Elliston's words she thought it was pretty clear that he not only had seen them, but had refused to strike the Dancing Master out of the Cambridgeshire. "If Greyson won't take orders he must take consequences:" that surely could only mean that her father had declined to obey his patrons on this point; and Dollie was much too conversant with turf history not to know that when Elliston said he would take care the horse should not start foul play of some kind was contemplated.

Were all Gerald's hopes to be frustrated in this wise? No! Something must be done to prevent it! What villainy was meditated? She must see Gerald at once. He would know what was best to be done. It was clear there was no time to be lost; but where was she to find him? She did not know where he lodged, and it was getting time for the day's racing to commence. Once on the Heath, he might be so engaged as to leave no opportunity for speaking with him the whole afternoon. And yet she felt sure that her news would brook no delay in the telling. At last she bethought herself of the stables where her father's charges were standing, and made her way thither.

The first person she encountered in the yard was Joe Butters, who, seated on an upturned stable-bucket, was solacing himself with a tankard of mild ale and a little tobacco, previous to commencing his duties on the course.

"Where is Mr. Rockingham?" inquired Dollie. "I must speak with him at once, Joe! Do you think you could find him?"

"Well, miss," replied Butters, as he leisurely rose from his seat, "Mr. Rockingham cantered up to the Heath about ten minutes ago. He said he had to see Lord Whitby before the racing began."

"But you are going up with the horses, Joe?"

"Yes, miss, in about half-an-hour. We've nothing in the first two races."

"Well, of course you'll see Mr. Rockingham."

"I don't know about to speak to. You see, Jim—I mean Mr. Rockingham—don't ride for us as a rule, though I do hear he's to ride the Dancer to-morrow. My word, Miss Dollie, but we ought to set the bells ringing at Riddleton this time. Why, if the Dancer only tries, our pair ought to finish first and second for the Cambridgeshire."

"And which do you like the best, Joe?" inquired the girl, eagerly.

"Well, I've got my pound on Caterham. You see he is a horse you can depend upon. If you was only going to ride the Dancer yourself, Miss Dollie, I fancy he would win far enough."

"Never mind that. You shall have a pound on the Dancer with me. He ran straight enough with Mr. Rockingham before, Joe; and mind, he will again to-morrow. Now listen to what I've got to say to you. If you cannot see Mr. Rockingham yourself, you must manage to get this message sent to him: say that I wish to see him on a matter of the greatest importance as soon as possible."

"All right, miss; I'll manage it somehow. Mr. Rockingham will know where you are, I suppose?"

"Yes; he has only to ask father. Don't forget—of the greatest importance, remember." And, with an emphatic little nod, Dollie walked quickly away to prepare for the Heath.

Mr. Greyson had chartered one of those mysterious ramshackle vehicles to convey Mrs. Greyson and Dollie to the Heath which seems almost peculiar to Newmarket; though the racecourse-fly has a family resemblance all over the country. One peculiarity about them is that they occasionally have an equine celebrity, grievously fallen from his high estate, between the shafts. I remember seeing in a Stockbridge trap of this description a horse whose parents

had both taken classic honours at Epsom: his sire had won the Derby, his mother the Oaks; and similar glories had been expected from him in his youth. And this, after all, was the termination of his career!

The racing proved, as is often the case at Newmarket on an off-day, of a very tame description; and Dollie awaited the advent of her lover with scarce-controlled impatience. The one feature of the afternoon's sport was when, in intervals between the races, the Cambridgeshire was introduced, a growing desire to back the Dancing Master was evident; and it was whispered about that a strong commission was in the market, although not apparently emanating from the stable. Elliston and his partner were more puzzled than ever at the aspect of affairs.

At length Gerald cantered up on his hack, and raised his hat amidst the admiring stare of the surrounding crowd; for the "gentleman jockey" was by this time not only well known but immensely popular. Quickly it was buzzed about that the ladies "Jim Forrest was a-talking to" were the wife and daughter of Bill Greyson, who owned the now first favourite for the Cambridgeshire; for Lord Whitby's heavy commission, on the top of the big investments of Sir Marmaduke and his friends, had at length placed the Dancing Master at the head of the poll: and it was by this time no secret that "the gentleman jockey," as his admirers delighted to call him, would ride that erratic animal.

"Ten thousand pardons, Dollie, dearest; but I only got your message an hour or so ago, and am so busy I couldn't get here before. As it is I have had to bucket my hack unmercifully. Good-day, Mrs. Greyson; the sport is not of much account this afternoon, but, if we get the black and crimson home first to-morrow, it won't be a dull week, you know, altogether."

"And you will, won't you, Mr. Rockingham?"

"I hope so," he replied, laughing. "And now, Dollie," he continued, lowering his voice, "what is it? I've no time

to lose, as I must get back to ride Grand Turk in the next race."

"There's something wrong about the Dancing Master, Gerald. I've overheard Cuthbert Elliston say that he would take care he didn't start."

"Ha!—who to?" inquired Rockingham, eagerly.

"To Mr. Pearson."

"And there was no one else present; and they don't know you overheard them?"

"There were only those two in the room, and I feel sure they don't know I was within earshot."

"This must be seen to as soon as possible. Both Elliston and Pearson are on the course; I have seen them. Meet me at the stables as soon as you can. I shall ride straight back after the next race, as I have no mount in the concluding one. I have proved a little too much for Cuthbert once or twice already, and I shouldn't wonder if I do again. Good-bye, Dollie, for the present. On you go, Captain Barclay," and Gerald just pressed his hack with his knees, and the docile brute swung into a hand-canter at once, and in obedience to his master's hand made his way to the starting-post for the Brethby Stakes Course.

Gerald called his hack after the famous pedestrian, saying he was always doing his 1,000 miles over the Heath after the manner of his godfather.

Dollie found little difficulty in persuading her mother to leave the course before the last race. It was the good lady's first visit to Newmarket, and to tell the truth she was not very favourably impressed with it. She found it dull. At York she had lots of friends and acquaintances to chat with, which to her was half the fun of a race-meeting. Then the perpetual change of course bothered her, and she came to the conclusion that they managed these things infinitely better in the North, so that she was quite willing to drive home to tea as soon as her daughter suggested it.

Her mother once comfortably deposited in their lodgings,

Dollie immediately slipped down to the stables, where she found Gerald awaiting her, and at once told him her story.

Gerald listened very attentively, and when she had finished, said :

"There can be no doubt about it. They have, I know, backed Caterham to win a very large stake, and the appearance of the Dancer on the scene has frightened them. Your father has most likely told them if he chooses to run kind the grey will beat them, and also declined to scratch the horse. Elliston undoubtedly means foul play of some sort. I shall sleep in the stable, and watch the Dancer's box myself, to-night, and take care that either Butters or myself are with him till the Cambridgeshire's over. Now run home, and say nothing to any one of what you have overheard. Good-bye, dearest; I should have come up to spend the evening, but don't expect to see anything of me now till after the race."

No sooner had Dollie disappeared than Gerald went in search of Butters. That worthy was speedily found in the immediate vicinity, discussing the race with some of his own class, and giving it as his opinion that one of the Riddleton pair would win. Further pressed upon the subject, he informed his hearers that he preferred Caterham himself, but that Mr. Forrest was the greatest horseman of the day, and, with the Dancing Master in his hands, there was no knowing what might happen.

Just as he delivered himself of this oracular opinion the gentleman jockey himself appeared, and was immediately an object of great attraction to the little knot of stablemen to whom Mr. Butters had been holding forth.

"Here, Joe, I want you," exclaimed Gerald.

"All right, Mr. Rockingham. What is it?" replied Butters, not a little gratified to show the intimate terms he was on with the great man to the little circle he was leaving. A bit of snobism common to people of infinitely higher station than Joe Butters.

"I want to see the horses at once, Joe. Have you got the key of the stable?"

"I've one, and Mr. Greyson another," replied Butters, as he led the way thither without further comment.

They entered the stable, which consisted of four loose boxes and a couple of roomy stalls. One of these latter contained a considerable amount of clean straw. The other was empty save for a large corn-bin which stood in its entrance. The boxes were all tenanted by Greyson's charges.

"This is the Dancer's box, isn't it?" said Gerald, as he walked towards the one at the far end from the door.

"Yes; and Caterham's next him."

Gerald opened the box and went in. The horse looked round, and gave a low whinny of recognition. He was evidently in the very bloom of condition—his coat shone like satin, and his eye, clear and bright, denoted that the animal was in perfect health. Gerald cast a keen glance at the horse's legs, and saw they were clean and flat, such as gladden the heart of a trainer. He walked up to the Dancer and examined him closely. He was apparently satisfied with the result of his examination, for as he closed the box-door behind him he muttered, "All's safe so far."

"Now, Joe," he continued aloud, "what you and I have got to do is this—one or other of us must never leave the horse till after to-morrow's race. I've just heard, on good authority, that they are determined to get at him."

"What! Do you mean to say," said Butters, "that any one intends to nobble the Dancer?"

"So I hear, Joe; but not if we know it."

"Why, who's going to do it?"

"Never mind that," replied Gerald. "The horse is all right. Now, you and I will keep watch here to-night, and take very good care they don't. If my information is correct we shall see who they are. It is gratifying in one way, at all events. It shows they think as highly of his chance as

I do. Now be off and get something to eat as quick as you can, and then come back to me."

On Butters relieving guard Gerald slipped out on a similar errand, and on his return said, "Now, Joe, we shall have to pass the night here. You can lie down amongst the straw and go to sleep. I can trust you to stick to me in a row, but you know, Joe, I can't trust you to keep awake."

"Well, Mr. Rockingham, I've a way of dropping off, and the worst of it is I sleep that heavy that I take a good deal of waking."

"All right! you go and lie down. Very little sleep does for me, and I'll get that towards morning. In the meanwhile, I'll keep watch."

That the spirit may be willing but the flesh weak is a very world-worn axiom, and to no one did it apply more forcibly than to Mr. Butters. He would spare himself in no wise to secure success and glory to Riddleton, but in the matter of watchfulness and abstinence he was frail. He could not keep awake by night nor abstain from the flesh-pots by day. He sighed over his somnolency and craving for pastry, and shuddered at the sight of a weighing-machine, but he knew his failings, and that to wrestle with them was beyond him. It was with a sigh of relief he heard the rôle assigned to him, and received his orders.

"You can depend upon me, Mr. Rockingham," said Joe, as he nestled down amongst the straw. "I ain't good, perhaps, at keeping my eyes open, but I am all there when I am wanted. You can depend upon me, Mr. Rockingham. I'm all there—all, all," and here a low snore terminated Mr. Butters's protestations of fealty.

Gerald seated himself on the corn-bin, and commenced his vigil. With the big stake he had on the morrow, and accustomed to do with but little sleep, he felt no inclination to close his eyes. Could his cousin be such a scoundrel as actually to meditate laming or poisoning the Dancing Master, or had he such confidence in his old influence over

Greyson as to feel sure that he could persuade him to scratch the horse? No; his first impression was right. Greyson had doubtless declined to do that, and Elliston had resolved to disable the horse before the race. Would he attempt this himself? Hardly. He doubtless could lay his hand upon plenty of instruments to do his bidding if they were only well paid for it. Then his thoughts reverted upon the race to-morrow, and how he should ride it. "Yes," he muttered, "he's a free horse, and runs best in front. He's thrown in as far as the weight goes, and if he does his best I'm afraid of nothing. I'll come right through and strangle the lot." Suddenly there was a slight glimmer of light beneath the bottom of the door, and a low grating sound, as of some one softly trying the lock.

"A skeleton key," said Gerald to himself, as he slipped quietly off the corn-bin, and crouched down behind it.

The door opened, and two men entered; the first carried a dark lantern, the slide of which he drew cautiously back: the second, a short, pousy man, had a twitch in one hand, and a short stick, marvellously like a heavy office-ruler, in the other.

"Hold the lantern," said Elliston, in a low whisper. "If I get the twitch on, I'll make him shin-sore artistically; if not, I must lame him clumsily with one blow. Come on, it's the far box."

The two stole along towards the Dancing Master's box, and, as they did so, Gerald rose from behind the corn-bin and crept stealthily after them. Absorbed in their own villainy they failed to hear his cautious footsteps. Elliston's hand was on the latch of the box, Pearson just raising the lantern to assist his partner, when Gerald exclaimed quietly, "Drop that, Mr. Elliston."

For a second or two the confederates were so disconcerted by discovery that they stood paralysed and speechless; then with a savage execration Elliston rushed upon his cousin,

and, before Gerald had time to jump back, struck him across the face with the twitch.

"Here, Joe—Joe—help!" shouted young Rockingham, as he grappled fiercely with his assailant.

But the attorney was now quite alive to the exigencies of the situation; it was quite clear to him that to disable Gerald and escape as speedily as might be was now the only chance of averting most unpleasant consequences. He dodged for a second or two round the two struggling men, and was about to aim a heavy blow at Gerald, when Butters, plunging into the fray, caused him to look to himself, and the short heavy stick descended sharply upon Joe's cranium, instead of young Rockingham's, stretching the former senseless on the ground. At this juncture Gerald wrenched himself clear of his antagonist, and immediately took advantage of his position to commence out-fighting, and administer a sharp left-hander between the eyes that sent Elliston reeling against the sides of Caterham's box. Taking in the state of things at once, Gerald sprang upon the attorney, and, before Pearson was quite aware of the attack, had snatched the stick from his hand. There was no time to be lost; Pearson threw down the lantern and made for the door, which his confederate had already gained. The diversion was successful; in his anxiety to possess himself of the lantern before harm should come from it, for Pearson had cast it perilously near the straw, Gerald neglected pursuit; and, when that necessary act was accomplished, came to the hasty conclusion that it was better to succour Butters and soothe the horses, already disturbed and uneasy at the unusual noise, than follow the fugitives, both of whom he had recognised.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE CAMBRIDGESHIRE.

THERE was great excitement at Newmarket in the course of the next morning, for, despite the precautions of Gerald, it had oozed out that there had been a daring attempt to get at the favourite during the night. Except to Greyson Gerald had breathed no word of his nocturnal adventure, and he had cautioned Butters to be equally reticent. Joe had held his tongue pretty fairly, still he but lamely explained his cut head, and had not the *sang froid* to emulate his companion's coolness, who, if questioned about how he came by the mark on his cheek, replied curtly, "No matter." In the betting world, both in London and at Newmarket, the rush to get on the Dancing Master was tremendous, and even staggered the Ring, cool as that philosophical body ordinarily is. The outlays of Sir Marmaduke and his followers, coupled with that of Lord Whitby, completely ran away with the public's own judgment. Notwithstanding the many disappointments the horse had occasioned them, they argued that the astute baronet would never have trusted him once more unless upon unexceptional grounds. It was rumoured that, although running in Greyson's name, he was still Sir Marmaduke's property, that he had run a tremendous trial, and was 7lb. in front of Caterham. Then this was Lord Whitby's year; everything he touched came off, and decades of bad luck were being rapidly avenged. Backers are notoriously superstitious, and many of them much given to following a lucky jockey, a lucky horse, a lucky stable, or even coincidences. In 1869, when the followers of the cherry and black remembered that Sir Joseph Hawley had won the Derby in the years 1858 and 1859, and that he had won it again in 1868, what wonder they hardened their hearts and looked upon it that he was bound to win it twice running in each decade, and dashed down their money

on unlucky Pero in consequence? Old horses allotted light weights have many times shown a marvellous recovery of their juvenile form in the Cambridgeshire, and for all these reasons combined the public went wild about the Dancing Master, and the fielders shortened their price hourly.

There were many old hands who had entrusted their money to Caterham, and many others whose eggs were in other baskets, men who could not get over the horse's uncertain temper, and were themselves no believers in his ultimate victory, yet they all agreed that such a red-hot favourite they never remembered in all their experience; and, though no doubt there were exceptions they could all point to, yet these red-hot favourites generally won, or, at the worst, made their opponents tremble in their shoes. So that even those cool, unprejudiced race-goers who were ranged against the self-willed grey had conceived a great respect for his chance. Then there was that now-announced fact that he was to be the gentleman jockey's mount—and that at once ranged all the women on his side; and if in our gradually advancing civilisation there are people so innocent as to believe that ladies of the present day, or, for the matter of that, of many days past, do not bet, the writer respects their simplicity, and would not willingly disturb such credulity.

"I don't know quite what to think of it all, Mr. Rockingham," said the trainer, as Gerald looked in at the stables, previous to cantering up to the course. "The Dancer's a little fretful, and snatched at his corn this morning in a fidgety, impatient manner that looks bad for his behaviour on the Heath to-day. He's an excitable horse, and last night's row in his stable there's no doubt upset him a bit. As for Caterham, he's as cool as possible; he's one of the level-tempered sort that a salvo of artillery wouldn't disturb except for the moment. Then how are you yourself, sir? No sleep and a rough-and-tumble fight ain't a good preparation for a big race."

"I'm all right, Greyson, never fear. I'll ride as good a

race to-day as ever I did. Mind, put that heavy double-reined snaffle on him as we settled; pet, coax, and keep him as quiet as you can. Don't saddle among the others, so as not to excite him, and I shall do as I told you—come right through with him; so if you don't see me playing follow-my-leader before we've gone a quarter of a mile you will understand the Dancer's got his own opinion and I've had to give in to it."

"Yes, Mr. Rockingham, you're right after all. Though you're to ride your own way to-day, it's coming back to pretty much the orders I gave you more than two years ago."

"I shall ride identically the same way, except that I understand the brute's mouth better, thanks to Dollie. Now I'm off."

"And I trust to Heaven, Mr. Rockingham, you'll win. I've borne the tyranny of these men for years, and done more dirty work for them than I care to think about. Pearson has had me in his debt so deep that I dare not disobey him, but it was Mr. Elliston who gave the orders always. I've broken with them now, and must stand the consequences, but, after last night's business, I should fancy they'll be rather shy of law-courts, or aught else."

"You're not likely to see them to-day; and, win or lose, depend upon it they'll never set foot on an English race-course again. When Lord Whitby and Sir Marmaduke hear the story, Messrs. Elliston and Pearson will get warning with regard to Newmarket, depend upon it. As for the rest, Greyson, if we're beaten, you'll worry through, never fear."

The trainer sat musing on the now, so to say, historic corn-bin, behind which Gerald had crouched the preceding night. "To think," he muttered, "that my daughter should be going to marry a real swell; and not only that, but the best horseman in England, and one of the finest, pluckiest young ones ever I ran across, high or low. Damme, if ever they persuade me into doing another 'shunt.' Well," he continued, rising, "it's getting about time we were off.

Joe; you may get 'em out and walk 'em up to the Heath. If anybody's got two for the big race which looks better than mine, I should just like to see 'em, that's all. I'm just going across the yard to get my hack—I shan't be five minutes; but mind, Joe, the Cambridgeshire horses you're never to leave till their jockeys are in the saddle."

Another quarter of an hour, and Greyson and his horses were leisurely wending their way to the Heath. There, of course, the wildest *canards* about the attempt "to get at the favourite" were current. The people just down from London were agog to hear all about it, for the report had been wired to town; but, though there were plenty of the sojourners at Newmarket only too delighted to relate their version of the affair, yet, as we know, the actual particulars were known only to three people, besides the delinquents—namely, Gerald, Butters, and Greyson. But, if the peril the favourite had been in was involved in mystery, there was no doubt in the public mind that it had been successfully surmounted; and their anxiety to be on what one of the boldest of the sporting prophets had pronounced "the best thing of the year" waxed stronger every hour. For the backers had fairly tired out the fielders, and the leading members of the Ring, when asked, "What about the Dancing Master?" replied, "They'd no more money to lay." Still, it had been a good betting-race from the first; and, though there was no doubt the success of the Dancing Master would take an immense sum out of the Ring, there was a wonderful lot of whilom favourites that had never even seen Newmarket, to assist them on settling-day, to say nothing of various other public fancies, that money would have to be paid over largely should they go down before the favourite.

That the story of the attempt to get at the favourite should reach the ears of such strong supporters of his chance as Sir Marmaduke and Captain Farrington was only natural; and the baronet, upon arriving on the Heath, at once sought Gerald, with a view to hearing the true version of the affair,

and also to learn from the best authority that the horse had really suffered no injury. Sir Marmaduke had backed the Dancing Master heavily, and it had been in consequence of what Gerald had told him. The baronet, with his great chum, Captain Farrington, had no sooner arrived at Newmarket than he was told "Jim Forrest" wished to see him, and Gerald then advised them both to try and get back their Hunt Cup losses over the Cambridgeshire. Sir Marmaduke at first demurred, and vowed he would never risk another shilling on that evil-tempered grey. But Gerald implored them both to have at all events a little on the Dancing Master this time.

"It's absurd, Sir Marmaduke, to say I lost you the Leger a year ago, but I have always bitterly regretted that I let my absurd false pride stand in the way, and begged off riding for you at Doncaster. Blackton is quite as good a man as I, and I've no doubt did the horse every justice; but, you see, he's just one of those queer brutes that might try for some one he knew, and refuse to do so otherwise. I've reason to think he'll run kind with me. I know he's very well, and I'll guarantee he's meant."

"All right, Rockingham, I'll have a quiet hundred on, and you'd better trust him once more, Marm, to that extent," said Farrington.

And so at last it was settled that the Dancing Master was to be once more entrusted with what Farrington described as a "modest century a-piece." But it was little likely that such two daring plungers would restrict their investments to that amount, and, as we know, Sir Marmaduke's operations at "the Rooms" had been conducted on his wonted scale. Lord Whitby also had derived his inspiration from the same source, so that the Dancer numbered amongst his supporters some of the very heaviest bettors on the turf.

But Gerald was by no means easy to come by, and Sir Marmaduke cantered his hack about a good deal in the fruitless endeavour to get speech with him. He was purposely

keeping out of the way as much as possible. He was anxious to avoid all questioning about last night's work till the big race was over. He certainly now held his cousin in the hollow of his hand. Let him but denounce Cuthbert Elliston and Pearson to Sir Marmaduke and Lord Whitby, both members of the Jockey Club, and the pair were socially ruined. It would be bad enough for the attorney, but for Elliston it meant social extinction.

He had not quite made up his mind as to what he would do. To take a terrible revenge for all the woe he believed these two men to have wrought his father, to repay his cousin's undying enmity fourfold, all this was within his power; but, on the other hand, Elliston was his cousin, and the disgrace of one member of a family is a thing never to be desired by the rest, however they may dislike him or her.

Pearson also would make very easy terms with Greyson if he were once let know that silence about last night's business was conditional on his doing so. Gerald had so far seen neither of the confederates on the Heath, still that might be because they were keeping aloof from the crowd as far as business permitted.

But, though Sir Marmaduke failed to find Gerald, he at length discovered Greyson with his charges, walking quietly round and round, at the back of the Ditch.

"Good morning, Greyson," said the baronet. "What is all this I hear about an attempt to get at your horse last night?"

"Well, Sir Marmaduke, it didn't succeed, and we don't want to talk about it. I'm told you've backed my horse for a good bit. I can only say he never was better, and if he don't win to-day it's no fault of mine. He can't be fitter, but he's a bit of a rogue, as you know; and, though Mr. Rockingham thinks he'll run honest with him, I don't know what to think about it."

"He looks well, and so for the matter of that does Caterham. Then, Mr. Elliston fancies his chance very much, and,

to tell you the truth, so do I, although I let Rockingham persuade me into backing the other."

"The two horses will run on their merits, Sir Marmaduke. and I've no doubt whatever that the grey *can* beat Caterham. Whether he *will* depends on himself."

By this time Butters and his assistants had whipped the rugs off, and were carefully preparing Caterham and the Dancer for the coming struggle, when Gerald cantered up on his hack.

"Weighed in?" said the trainer interrogatively.

"Yes," replied Gerald, "7·12; all right. Robinson and I stand a cross fifty on our mounts. Look sharp, Joe, and slip my saddle on to the back of the Dancer."

"Ah! he rides Caterham, and backs yours against his own as a hedge," replied the trainer. "Where is he?"

"Here he comes," replied Gerald, pointing to a horseman who was nearing them as fast as his steed could carry him.

"Good morning, Rockingham," said Sir Marmaduke. "I came down here to look for you, as I'm told you had a bit of trouble at the stables last night, but Greyson tells me you prefer to hold your tongue about it. I can only say that for such a thing to be possible is a slur upon Newmarket, and if you like to bring it forward I'm quite prepared to take it up."

"Thank you, Sir Marmaduke, but neither I nor the horse are any the worse, and we'll leave it alone for the present, at all events. I'm off now; but remember," he continued, dropping his voice, "if you see me in front at 'the turn of the lands' I shall take a deal of catching.—Now, Joe, give me a leg up. I want to have the Dancer to myself for a few minutes before we go down to the post. What's the latest news up there, Robinson?" and Gerald jerked his finger in the direction of the betting-ring.

"Yours as strong as brandy in the market, mine very steady; but that Fedora that won the Leger last year has come with a rattle, and there's apparently plenty of people

who think she can give us 7 lbs. and lose us. They'll change their note before the day is over, eh, Jim?"

"You're safe to finish in front of her, Tom, and I shall beat you both, or not be in it at all. Now I'm off to give my mount a canter," and as he spoke Gerald, who was by this time in the saddle, set his horse quietly going in the direction of the Cambridgeshire post.

"Well, I shall go back to the Stand to see the race," said the baronet. "Wish you success, Greyson," and sticking spurs to his hack Sir Marmaduke made the best of his way back to the desired coign of vantage.

"What orders, Mr. Greyson?" inquired Tom Robinson, when he found himself duly installed on Caterham's back.

"Mr. Elliston always gives his own orders," rejoined the trainer, sharply. "If he hasn't seen you yet, no doubt he will at the starting-post."

"Supposing he don't?" inquired Robinson, curtly.

"Then ride him as you like. The horse can both race and stay, and is thoroughly wound up. I can tell you no more, and decline to give any orders under the circumstances."

"It ain't like Mr. Elliston," replied the jockey, as he cantered off to the post. "No," he muttered, "one's usually rather hampered with orders when one rides for him."

"Where are you going to see the race from, Marm?" inquired Captain Farrington, as the baronet cantered up to the betting-ring. "It's been pretty lively work in here for the last half-hour. The Dancing Master's nominally first favourite, but there's nobody has any money left to lay. Caterham's firm, and Fedora's come with a rattle, while half-a-dozen more are backed a bit."

"I'm going on to the Stand, as I want to see how our horse gets off, and how he is when he passes it. I have just seen Rockingham. He means coming right through if he can, which will suit the Dancing Master's temper, and make the most of his light weight."

"All right ; but we shan't see what wins from there."

"No ; but young Rockingham says he shall have about won at the 'turn in the lands' just beyond."

"I like his extraordinary confidence, although I don't understand it, more especially with such a disappointing horse as he is riding," replied Farrington, as they took their places and adjusted their glasses.

The roar of the Ring is hushed, for the twenty-six horses are now in the hands of the starter, and speculation has ceased. Greyson and Butters are both down at the post to see the Riddleton pair despatched on their journey. There are some few false starts, and, though the Dancing Master behaves tolerably well, yet he gives more than one manifestation that the old Adam is by no manner of means dead within him. Still, when the flag does fall he gets off on very fair terms with his horses, and to Gerald's delight takes hold of his bridle as if he meant it. The first to show in front is a lightly-weighted four-year called St. Lawrence, but just before reaching the Stand Gerald deprives him of the command, and at the "turn in the lands" is leading a couple of lengths.

"Looks rosy so far," said the baronet.

"Yes ; but they're a long way off yet—not half way, indeed," rejoined Farrington.

In a fly nearly opposite the winning-post were Dollie and her mother, both in a state of considerable excitement, with their race-glasses riveted on the straight broad green ribbon that constitutes the Cambridge course.

"The favourite leads ! The favourite walks in !" shout half a score of the Dancer's enthusiastic supporters.

"Caterham's going well, and Fedora's not done with," exclaims a veteran in the next carriage to Dollie. "But by Jove young Rockingham is bringing them along a cracker. Some of them won't last much longer. Look at the tailing already."

"The mare's done with ! Fedora's beat !" roar a hundred

throats as the Leger victress succumbs to the severity of the pace.

"Robinson's riding Caterham!" yell the crowd again, as a couple of hundred yards from home that jockey is compelled to call upon his horse to keep his place.

"The favourite wins in a canter!" cry a score of voices. Ah, what's this in orange that's coming like a flash almost under the judge's chair? Does Forrest see it? He does evidently, but sits still as death. It is a supreme moment with Gerald. The Dancing Master he knows is doing pretty well his best. Dare he move on his horse? If he does, that eccentric animal may shut up instantaneously. The new comer on the scene has caught him, has reached his girths, is now at his head. Still Gerald sits immovable. They are within two or three strides of home, and the orange horseman is doing all he knows. "The Dancer wins!" "Lisette wins!" and as the two shoot past the post, Gerald still motionless, the crowd draw a long breath, and ask each other what's won?

"Forrest threw the race away," cries one indignant backer of the favourite; "he never even called on his horse."

"I tell you he's won, and never rode a more magnificent race," rejoins another.

"Wait till the numbers are up and you'll see," retorted the first.

Whichever way it was, it was evidently a very close thing between the favourite and this almost friendless outsider, a mare who had started at the extreme price of 30 to 1, but whose six stone four had stood her in good stead, thanks to the severity of the pace.

Up go the numbers at last, and Gerald is as much relieved as any one to find that his adversary failed to quite get up, and that the verdict is in his favour by a short head.

CHAPTER XLVII.

CONCLUSION.

THE announcement of the winner on the telegraph-board was greeted with ominous silence. The Ring, as a rule, take their punishment without flinching, but men cannot be expected to wax hilarious over the losing of money. Then, again, Mr. Greyson was no popular owner of race-horses whose money the Ring had often had, but a chary backer, manager of a crafty, unscrupulous stable, that had set the fielders many a hard problem to solve, and bled them wickedly many a time. Even the public—who at the eleventh hour had rushed wildly on the Dancing Master—were dissatisfied. They had had to accept a very short price, and they had lost many and many a pound over the capricious winner when he had declined resolutely to gallop a yard for their investments. It was no doubt a wonderfully fine point between the leading pair, and Gerald frankly admitted he did not know whether he had just won or just lost till the numbers were up; but the decision of the judge on any leading English racecourse is no more disputed than the summing-up of a judge in any one of our law-courts. That there have been cases in which the turf verdict has been deemed a mistake, similarly as the summing-up at Westminster has been held erroneous, there is no doubt; but in neither case is it ever regarded as other than final.

“You were about right, Marm,” said Farrington, when the result of the race reached them, “and so was Rockingham. At the ‘turn of the land’ things looked very comfortable. It was the place for the Dancing Master’s backers with the straight tip to see it from, but it must have been a wonderful squeak at the finish from all accounts.”

“Yes; all our own fault,” replied the baronet, sententiously. “We were dolts to forget that mare’s form of last

year. It's all right, but she was every bit as much turned loose as the Dancer."

"Oh, Gerald, my darling, I thought you had lost!" exclaimed Dollie, as, the "weighing-in" satisfactorily concluded, Rockingham cantered up to his betrothed's carriage to receive her congratulations.

"I was much afraid so myself, and I fancy it was about as short a head as ever was given, but I was afraid to move on the Dancer. Good horse as he is, he was about all out, and I thought at any attempt to call upon him he would perhaps turn it up."

"I don't think so myself," rejoined Dollie, "but that is mere matter of opinion. He ran better in the snaffle, didn't he?"

"Yes; and for all I know might have won much more decidedly if I had dared take any liberties with him. As it was I never interfered further than taking him to the front. I followed your father's original orders afterwards, and left it to himself."

"And the old horse was just equal to the occasion, eh, Gerald?"

"Yes; it was a shave, and I never rode so trying a race, and never shall by any possibility again. To have a wife and a home depending, so to speak, on the result, and nothing for it but to sit and suffer, is to test one's nerve and patience with a vengeance, and whether young Craddock had caught me or not I didn't know till I saw the numbers."

"Congratulations, Mr. Rockingham!" said a deep voice behind them. "I have been indebted to your horsemanship a good many times this year, but anything finer than your masterly inactivity just now I never witnessed."

"Ah, Lord Whitby, it is a comfort to know you understood it. Half the people here think I all but lost the race from carelessness."

"Half the people here are chattering idiots," rejoined the

irascible peer. "On a horse like that you were afraid, of course, to move."

"Let me introduce you to my wife that is to be," interposed Gerald, abruptly. He was in good humour with the world, and in no mood for any causeless explosion on the part of his irritable patron.

"Then I must still further congratulate you," rejoined Lord Whitby, as he raised his hat to Dollie, "and I trust your bride will accept a trifling memento of the Cambridgeshire from an old friend of your father's. Your intended excelled himself to-day. It was the most perfect exhibition of nerve and patience his winning the Cambridgeshire I have witnessed in five-and-thirty years' racing. May you both be sincerely happy!" and once more raising his hat his lordship rode off.

It was a grim settling next Monday at Tattersall's. The Ring paid, as that often-abused body as a rule always does, but there was a heavy account due from the owner of Caterham, for the meeting of which apparently no provision whatever had been made. Mr. Elliston, it was rumoured, had gone abroad, nor could any one remember to have seen him since the day previous to the Cambridgeshire. Although Sam Pearson was not present, such bets as stood in his own name were all met; but the bookmakers felt pretty certain that he was actually responsible for a considerable portion of those made by his colleague, although his commissioner disclaimed any such liability on his part.

"Rather warm for the fraternity," remarked Farrington to Broughton, as he swept another little sheaf of banknotes into his hat.

"Yes, Captain, it's a scorcher, that's what it is; and Mr. Elliston not 'weighing-in' with the Caterham money of course makes it rather worse for us. Still, none of us grudge Lord Whitby, yourself, or Sir Marmaduke your winnings. We've hit you all hard enough in your time, and

we don't generally whimper when we find 'you've got us on toast.'"

The bookmaker's language was perhaps enigmatical, but Farrington was thoroughly versed in the shibboleth of the betting-ring, and manifested no surprise.

"Mr. Elliston's account not being to the fore is, of course, a little hard upon you, but I've no doubt it's only a question of time."

"Yes, I suppose so. Mr. Elliston's an old customer, if not a very liberal one, and I daresay he'll settle after a while."

But it was a long day before Cuthbert Elliston ventured to return to England, nor was his face ever seen again on an English racecourse. A hurried consultation took place between him and Pearson when they found themselves beyond the reach of pursuit, and they came to the conclusion that it behoved them to get away from Newmarket as speedily as possible, and they accordingly departed by the first train in the morning. When in the course of the afternoon the result of the race reached town, and Elliston ran over his betting-book, he found that he had stretched out his hand too far in his anxiety to grasp a large stake. It would be impossible for him to settle his liabilities in full, and he dared not besides face the consequences of his iniquitous attempt at disabling the favourite. The evening papers all alluded briefly to the affair, one with the addition that "it understood the most thorough investigation of the rascally business would take place, and it was much to be desired, in the best interests of the turf, that the prompters of the dastardly outrage should be dragged before the bar of public opinion, should evidence not be forthcoming to place them at the bar of a court of justice side by side of the miserable tools they had suborned."

Elliston crossed the Channel by that night's mail, while his partner sped northwards.

Gerald had a long talk with Greyson on the evening of

the race, and finally they came to the determination to keep the affair to themselves.

"I owe my cousin no kindness, but it will not redound to the credit of the family to expose him. We have won, and can afford to be liberal, and, providing the pair of them make no attempt to set foot on a racecourse in future, we'll hold our tongues. Eh, Greyson?"

"Yes; I think it will be best," replied the trainer. "You see, I've got a good bit of money together now, and if you take Pearson in hand I have no doubt I can settle with him on reasonable terms."

The attorney was only too glad to purchase silence about a transaction which would irretrievably ruin him if promulgated, and made no fuss about striking off usurious interest from the trainer's liabilities. He further covenanted for both himself and his partner that they should retire from the turf; and the sale of Phaeton, Caterham, &c., was speedily advertised. Nobody ever penetrated the cause of the abrupt break-up of the Elliston and Pearson confederacy, though Sir Marmaduke had a shrewd suspicion of the truth. It was usually attributed to an unsuccessful season, to which their severe losses over the Cambridgeshire put the coping-stone. As for the attorney, he throve and prospered exceedingly in his profession, and on the whole probably benefited by his retirement from racing. With his partner it was different; he merely substituted the card-table for the racecourse, and frequented the chief play-resorts of the Continent. As he encountered there many professional gamblers, with more skill than, but quite as unscrupulous as himself, he continued in his usual state of irritable impecuniosity, and poor Mrs. Elliston dreed as hard a lot as it is possible to mete out to woman.

Shortly after Christmas two weddings were celebrated in the parish church of Cranley; for Lord Whitby had acceded to Gerald's request to be allowed to buy the old place back from him.

"Certainly, my dear Rockingham," he said; "I don't want it. Take it at what I paid for it. I bought it chiefly to prevent that d——d scoundrel Cuthbert Elliston having it."

Ellen and Mrs. Rockingham had set their hearts upon the double ceremony taking place from Cranley, so the Greysons became Mrs. Rockingham's guests at the Chase for that week; and in the little village church, where they had knelt together as children, the brother and sister, one bright February morning, embarked upon the unknown waters of married life.

"Ah!" laughed Ellen to her sister-in-law, as the pair stood surveying their wedding presents, "how you and Gerald do beat us in this respect! It is better to marry a crack jockey than a poor parson when it comes to such jewels as these;" and Miss Rockingham lifted admiringly a handsome set of pearls and turquoise, the bridal gift of Lord Whitby.

* * * * *

There is no more to be told. All comedies finish with a marriage; and it is to be hoped that the old tag may apply: "That they lived happy ever afterwards." Gerald not only continued to follow his profession, but commenced the formation of a stud-farm at the Chase, and at the end of a few years the Cranley yearlings had earned for themselves a high reputation in the Doncaster sale-ring. He further usually had some few horses in training at Riddleton, with which he was more or less lucky.

In the hall of the Chase hangs a large picture of an almost snow-white steed, who has for years been lord of the Cranley stud, to whom Gerald always points as the horse who won back for him the lost home of his ancestors.

THE END.

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